

AN EIGHT DAYS' RETREAT

GABRIEL

17719

ST. PROCOPIUS COLLEGE LIBRARY

Lisle, Illinois

RULES

Borrowers are responsible for all books taken out on their cards.

Books may be kept for two weeks and renewed once for the same period, except fiction.

A fine of one cent per day will be charged on each book which is not returned according to the above rule.

Ma, 10			
FEB 4			
No. 293	DEMCO		

FEB 4 1964

DEMCO

AN EIGHT DAYS' RETREAT



Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2025

AN EIGHT DAYS' RETREAT

FOR
RELIGIOUS

BY
HENRY A. GABRIEL, S.J.

THIRD EDITION, REWRITTEN AND ENLARGED

B. HERDER BOOK CO.

17 SOUTH BROADWAY, ST. LOUIS, MO.

AND

33 QUEEN SQUARE, LONDON, W. C. 1.

1925

WITHDRAWN

269.6
G118e
1925
IMPRIMI POTEST

F. C. Dillon, S. J.,
Praep. Prov. Calif.

NIHIL OBSTAT

Sti. Ludovici, die 12 Oct. 1923

F. G. Holweck,
Censor Librorum.

IMPRIMATUR

Sti. Ludovici, die 13 Oct. 1923

✠ Joannes J. Glennon,
Archiepiscopus
Sti. Ludovici.

Copyright, 1925,

by

B. Herder Book Co.

All rights reserved

Printed in U. S. A.

PREFACE TO THE THIRD EDITION

Owing to a variety of circumstances it not seldom happens that a Religious is unable to make the yearly retreat under a competent director with the rest of the community. In the majority of such cases the only alternative is to make the retreat by oneself, as best one may with the assistance of some standard commentary on the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius. But as a rule these commentaries are found to be hardly adapted to this object. They are intended rather for the use of retreat-masters to help them bring out the profound doctrine, the logical sequence, and the lofty inspiration of the golden treatise left us by St. Ignatius Loyola.

The present book has been written primarily for the benefit of such members of Religious Institutes as purpose to make the Spiritual Exercises apart from the community. It supplies them with all the Meditations and Conferences that are usually given by experienced and zealous directors; and, while suggesting every little aid to a good retreat, it incidentally reviews the main principles and practices of Christian Asceticism. However, besides to subjects of Religious Institutes, this book may prove welcome also to members of the Secular Clergy, who wish to spend a few days in spiritual rest from the strenuous labors and numerous distractions of the ministry. Even educated laymen that are desirous, as far as their state permits, to follow the Counsels of Perfection, can find

PREFACE TO THE THIRD EDITION

in this book an abundance of sound instruction and solid encouragement, which, if gradually assimilated by humble and devout reflection, will not fail to render their lives more serene, more useful, and more meritorious.

Although this book is by no means a mere compilation from various commentaries on the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius, yet it would be obviously unwarranted to claim much originality for what is after all only a practical adaptation of the wonderful little treatise of our Holy Founder. The two successive revisions which the book has undergone since its first appearance, have brought about so many alterations and additions, that this third edition is almost a new work.

THE AUTHOR.

Mount St. Michael's, Hillyard, Wash.

Feast of the Annunciation, 1923.

PRAYERS

BEFORE THE POINTS

Come, O Holy Ghost, fill the hearts of Thy faithful and enkindle in them the fire of Thy love.

V. Pour forth Thy Spirit, and they shall be created.

R. And Thou shalt renew the face of the earth.

Let us pray.—O God, Who by the light of the Holy Spirit didst instruct the hearts of the faithful, grant us in the same Holy Spirit a loving relish of what is right and a constant enjoyment of His consolations. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Hail Mary.

O Sweetest Heart of Jesus, we implore,
That we may love Thee daily more and more.

AFTER THE POINTS

We give Thee thanks, O Almighty God, for all Thy benefits, Who livest and reignest world without end. Amen.

Hail Mary.

Sweet Heart of Jesus, be my love.

Sweet heart of Mary, be my salvation.

STABAT MATER

By the cross her station keeping,
Stood the mournful Mother weeping,

Close to Jesus to the last.

Through her soul with terror trembling,

Yet in love its pangs dissembling,

Now the sevenfold sword had passed.

Racked with pain and sorrow-laden

Was that ever-blessed Maiden,
Mother of the Holy One.

Plunged was she in grief amazing,

While upon the torments gazing
Of that venerated Son.

Who could see, from tears refraining,

Christ's own Mother uncomplaining

Under such affliction bent?

Who could calmly watch her languish

Neath that cross of shame and anguish

With atrocious suffering spent?

PRAYERS

Jesus for mankind atoning,
She beheld with pity moaning
In unmeasured torture die.
Saw Him sink in desolation,
Like an outcast of the nation,
Heard His loud expiring cry.

Mother, in this bitter ocean,
Wondrous fount of pure devotion,

Let me sigh and weep with thee.
Teach me how to love Him
solely,
Christ, thy Son and God most
holy,
That His will my law may be.

Grant, dear Mother, my petition:
Be my heart without remission
Wounded like the Crucified.
For my sake He freely chooses
Thorns and nails and countless
bruises;
Oh! with me His pains divide.

May my tears with thy affliction
Mingle in His crucifixion,
While a breath remains in me.
All thy mortal woes bewailing,
Bound by gratitude unfailing,
Let me stay on Calvary.

For thy Jesus, Virgin holy,
Do not scorn a client lowly,
Show thyself a Mother kind.
Help His form in me to fashion,
Share with me His sacred passion,
Stamp His wounds upon my
mind.

May His death my constant
vision,
May His stripes my one ambition,
May His cross my glory be.
Virgin, on thine aid relying,
Guard, I pray, from flames undying
And on doomsday succor me.

When this life is fast receding,
Hear, O Christ, Thy Mother's
pleading,
Grant her child the victor's
prize.
When this flesh is cold and
breathless,
May my soul forever deathless
Find its bliss in Paradise.
Amen.

ANIMA CHRISTI

Soul of Christ, sanctify me!
Body of Christ, save me!
Blood of Christ, inebriate me!
Water from the side of Christ, wash me!
Passion of Christ, strengthen me!
O Good Jesus, hear me!
Within Thy wounds, hide me!
Let me not be separated from Thee!
From the wicked enemy defend me!
In the hour of my death call me,
And bid me come to Thee:
That with Thy saints I may praise Thee
Forever and ever! Amen.

CONTENTS

	PAGE
INTRODUCTION	1
FIRST DAY	2
THE RIGHT DISPOSITION	3
FOUNDATION, FIRST PART	16
OUR SPIRITUAL DUTIES	30
FOUNDATION, SECOND PART	48
SECOND DAY	60
THE TRIPLE SIN	61
MY PERSONAL SINS	77
EMENDATION OF LIFE	92
SIN, INORDINATION, AND WORLDLINESS	103
THIRD DAY	114
HELL	115
THE KINGDOM OF CHRIST	129
THE RELIGIOUS STATE	142
THE INCARNATION	155
FOURTH DAY	167
THE HIDDEN LIFE AT NAZARETH	168
THE STAY IN THE TEMPLE	179
THE MOTIVES OF HUMILITY	191
TWO STANDARDS	202
FIFTH DAY	217
THREE CLASSES OF MEN	218
THE TEMPTATION IN THE DESERT	232
THE TRIPLE FRUIT OF HUMILITY	247
THE TEMPEST ON THE LAKE	261

CONTENTS

	PAGE
SIXTH DAY	271
THE CONVERSION OF MARY MAGDALEN	272
THE THREE DEGREES OF HUMILITY	284
THE HOLY EUCHARIST	296
THE LAST SUPPER	310
 SEVENTH DAY	 321
THE AGONY AND THE BETRAYAL	322
THE SCOURGING AND THE CROWNING WITH THORNS	333
THE HOLY MASS	345
THE CRUCIFIXION	359
 EIGHTH DAY	 369
THE RESURRECTION	370
THE ASCENSION	379
FRATERNAL CHARITY	389
DIVINE LOVE	402
 APPENDIX	 417
DEVOTION TO THE BLESSED VIRGIN	419
THE BADGE OF PERSEVERANCE	431
DEATH	439
BOOKS RECOMMENDED FOR RETREAT READING	451

AN EIGHT DAYS' RETREAT

DURING THIS HOLY RETREAT, CONSIDER FREQUENTLY THE ADORABLE PERSON OF JESUS CHRIST, PRESENTING HIMSELF BEFORE YOU IN HIS INCOMPARABLE MAJESTY AND SHOWING TO YOU HIS WOUNDED HEART, WHOLLY INFLAMED WITH LOVE, WHILST ADDRESSING TO YOU IMPLORINGLY THESE TENDER WORDS: "MY CHILD, GIVE ME YOUR HEART."

A. M. D. G.

“MY CHILD, GIVE ME YOUR HEART.”

FIRST DAY

PATRON: St. Margaret Mary.

MOTTO: “Lord, who is like to Thee?”

SPIRIT: Humility on account of my Nothingness.

READING: Imitation; Bk. I, C. 2, 3, 10, 20.

Bk. III, C. 1, 9, 10, 26, 27, 40.

Gospels; St. Luke, C. 6.

St. John, C. 1.

Begin the Retreat with real earnestness, thorough recollection, and loving confidence, beseeching God that He may deign to dispose of you entirely for His greater glory.

THE RIGHT DISPOSITION

Introductory Remarks.—When about to enter upon their annual Retreat some Religious experience a vague sense of fear, an indefinable apprehension, as if these days of solitude and prayer were destined to usher in some immense trial, some terrible affliction. This feeling is probably nothing else than a trace of that dreadful estrangement from God, which caused our first parents, after their sin of disobedience, to flee in anguish from His sacred presence. Fallen man shrinks from being alone with his Almighty Maker. Yet God is so good, so merciful, even to those of His children who have proved unfaithful and rebellious.

We know how our Adorable Savior felt towards the ungrateful inhabitants of Jerusalem and how He wept at the thought of the consequences of their blindness and obduracy. His Sacred Heart is animated by the same sentiments towards any Religious that may have spent the past year in a state of spiritual lukewarmness and venial sin. In fact, towards each individual soul, towards every single human being, God our Lord is immeasurably more loving than the most devoted father, mother, or friend. He is ceaselessly watching over each one of us with the most tender care, the most patient solicitude, intending and arranging even the smallest details of our lives, for our temporal happiness no less than for our eternal bliss. Oh! let us not resist His unspeakable love, let us not disappoint His mysterious longing,

let us not turn a deaf ear to His merciful exhortation, let us not compel Him by our ingratitude to withdraw from us the outward protection of His Admirable Providence or the inward guidance of His Holy Spirit.

The Retreat is a time of rest from study and care, but also a time of exertion and prayer. Yes, especially a time of prayer, of earnest, whole-souled, humble, confident supplication for light and strength, a time during which we should persist in crying out to our Lord, like the blind man of Jericho, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me." Yet we should avoid nervous strain, we should not work ourselves up into an unnatural mood or hysteric condition. While careful to apply what we learn to our actual condition, we must not take it for granted that every fault and every defect, mentioned in the course of this Retreat, is necessarily ours. Reason and reflection are never to be discarded, especially when we are under the sway of emotion. It would be well, with due leave, to take some extra repose if really needed in order to keep awake during the meditations, but by all means we should take plenty of fresh air during free time and sufficient nourishment at our meals.

The Retreat, when made in the old and approved way, consists in following a series of Spiritual Exercises, arranged by St. Ignatius Loyola; exercises that will teach us how to conquer ourselves and to regulate our lives for the greater glory of God, in other words, how to rid ourselves of all sin and inordination in order to accomplish perfectly the Divine Will. The Meditations form the main work of the Retreat. Even while engaged in "preparing the points" we should strive to raise our heart to God in humble aspirations, but afterwards we should put forth all our

energy to secure the desired fruit by fervent and persevering prayer.

Next in importance to the Meditations come the daily Examens of Conscience, which may very profitably be devoted to a thorough review of our past lives and especially of the last year. The other exercises, Holy Mass, Communion, Visits, Office, Rosary, should all be directed to the immediate object of the Retreat, which is our thorough self-conquest, our lasting amendment, our complete conversion. But we should not tire ourselves with a multiplicity of vocal prayers. The spiritual reading indicated for each day is entirely optional. As to Holy Communion, all can receive every day; and this will certainly prove very helpful to stir up in our hearts a sincere desire of correcting our faults and of advancing in virtue, provided we strive to make a better preparation than usual as well as a more fervent thanksgiving. Indeed, Holy Communion is one of the best means to profit by the Retreat, and hence is to be recommended most emphatically. Yet, at the same time, any one is free not to receive from motives of humility or for reasons of convenience. While each one should pray for his own special needs, he should nevertheless remember also those of others, so that the entire Community may derive great and lasting benefit from these Exercises.

Subject of this Meditation.—The Disposition with which I should enter upon this Retreat, in order to reap from it the fruit intended by Christ our Lord.

Composition of Place.—Some church or chapel where I see myself kneeling or prostrate in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament while these words ap-

pear to issue from the tabernacle: "Come to Me all you that labor and are heavy-burdened, and I will refresh you."

Petition for the Grace which I do actually Need and should ardently Implore.—That I may enter upon this Retreat, that I may accept this most loving invitation of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, in the best possible Disposition, so as to make it better than any previous Retreat and thus to render it the beginning of a life of real Holiness.

First Point. How to Accept the Retreat.

I should accept the Retreat with a great Desire, a holy Longing, a spiritual Hunger.

This Desire ought to be Sincere and Earnest, because these Holy Exercises will arm me against the spiritual enemies by whom I am surrounded, they will strengthen me against the great and manifold dangers which arise from the Flesh, the World, and the Devil: my natural habits of inconstancy, disorder, sluggishness, or impetuosity, and still worse, my deep-rooted passions of pride, sensuality, Selfishness; the contagious example, the downward influence, and the continual allurements of the World; the past victories, the present temptations, and the future assaults of the Devil. Perhaps I have already had some sad experience of my weakness and consequently been troubled with doubts about my Vocation; but even if everything has gone smoothly I must not be deluded by a false security. I should, then, welcome this Retreat with great earnestness at least from this moment. "Remember," says our Adorable Savior, "that Satan has asked to sift you like wheat, and that the Devil is going about like a roaring lion,

seeking whom he may devour. Yes, you especially, Religious, that have consecrated your lives entirely to My holy Service; you most especially, who left the world before knowing its corruption and entered the convent with souls unsullied by mortal sin." Briefly, as I have to save my soul at any cost and in spite of every obstacle, my Desire of the Retreat ought to be very Sincere and Earnest.

Moreover, this Desire should be Intense and Ardent. For the Retreat is an extraordinary Favor: not only quite singular, inasmuch as it is granted to relatively very few and usually not oftener than once a year; but also most precious, being productive of true peace of soul here below and of unspeakable happiness hereafter. Again, if made properly, these Spiritual Exercises will shed new light on the motives that should animate me in the Service of God as well as on the principles that are to guide me in the path of perfection, in fact, they will teach me unmistakably the short and sure means to attain real holiness. Accordingly, these same Exercises have filled the Church with fervent members, the convents with observant Religious, and heaven with blissful Souls. Witness their effect in St. Francis Xavier, in St. Peter Claver, in Bl. Edmund Campion, and hundreds of other Jesuits; in thousands of Confessors and Martyrs, Priests, Religious, and Laymen. Did I myself not experience something similar in my first Retreat well made? Every time I go through these Exercises, they should cause also in me a thorough transformation of mind, a real conversion of heart.

Lastly, my Desire should be Joyous and Gladsome. For, though human nature may shrink from an eight days' solitude, as a matter of fact, the Retreat imposes no special burden. After the mental work is

done in preparing the points, nothing remains but to pour out my soul in prayer; and, even as to this, God Himself will do by far the greater part, if only I open my mind to His light, if only I yield my heart to His grace. Besides, if I strive to do my little share generously from the start, His wonted consolations will abundantly compensate me for the extra fatigue, self-restraint, and seclusion. The Retreat, after all, is nothing but a school of divine love, a preparation for the unending joys of Paradise. But even if at times I should not be favored with any sensible fervor, yet I can in any case persevere with humility, confidence, and courage. For I am not alone, I am not fighting single-handed; however unworthy, I am a member of a numerous Religious Institute; more than this, I am a child of the Holy Catholic Church, militant on earth, suffering in purgatory, and triumphant in heaven. They are all praying and interceding for me; the Fervent Faithful, the Holy Souls, the Blessed Saints and Angels, and what is specially comforting, the Immaculate Virgin Mary herself, the Great Mother of God and also my Heavenly Mother. But what is incomparably more wonderful, the Adorable Heart of Jesus, in order to secure my spiritual advancement and real happiness, is ever pleading in my behalf with ineffable tenderness and earnestness.

Second Point. How to Begin the Retreat.

I should begin my Retreat, I should enter into this spiritual solitude, with a Fervor that excludes all Tepidity.

Fervor in Recollection: I must forcibly disengage myself, my mind and my heart, from all temporal interests and earthly concerns, in order to occupy myself exclusively with the care of my immortal Soul,

the making of a good Retreat. Fervor in Prayer: I must strive not only to keep detached from creatures but also to become more united to God; and, therefore, I must pray, beg, supplicate with deep humility, firm trust, and tender love; in one word, I must pray with the utmost energy, particularly in my Meditations, in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, in my Holy Communions, in my Visits to the Blessed Sacrament, in common and private Devotions. Fervor in Obedience: I must use great diligence in observing the daily order from the moment the bell rings for rising, in keeping constant guard over my eyes as well as over my tongue, and in embracing the little inconveniences and hardships that are incidental to going through these Spiritual Exercises.

By starting the Retreat with this Fervor in recollection, in prayer, and in obedience, we shall arm ourselves against various forms of Tepidity that would hamper the efficacy and even destroy the object of the work on which we are entering; such as Discouragement, Routinism, and Cowardice.

Discouragement with the Results of our past Retreats and Disappointment at the Failure of our good Resolutions.—“What is the use?” we may be tempted to exclaim, “I have already made so many Retreats, and I am still as imperfect as ever, if indeed not worse; while the Religious Life instead of becoming easier seems to be getting harder every year.” One might just as well argue with himself after this manner: “What is the use of eating and drinking? After so many thousands of meals I am still no stronger than when I was in my twenties, in fact, I am growing weaker and more sickly every day.”

Life is a race for Heaven. When we set out on a long excursion, everything is easy and pleasant in the

coolness and brightness of the early morning; but how different things appear, when we plod along weary, thirsty, and footsore, in the hot and dusty afternoon. So it has been ordained by our Heavenly Father that, as we grow older in years, sincerer in humility, and stronger in love, our difficulties, our sufferings, and even our temptations should increase in the same proportion, in order that thus we may always be able to increase our merits and to advance towards perfection. There is no progress without hindrance, just as there is no life without death.

As to our former Resolutions, we should bear in mind that we took them, not to be kept unflinchingly, nor to be broken constantly, but in order that we might learn, pray, and labor to carry them out. Evidently, this cannot be accomplished in a single day; and, when there is question of the acquisition of solid virtue, not even within the space of a whole year. While sincerely acknowledging our extreme weakness, we have no cause whatever to feel discouraged or disappointed on account of our little improvement. Only we should profit by our experience to spur ourselves on to greater fervor. Let us combine the buoyant energy and generous enthusiasm of earlier years with the sincere self-distrust and sturdy determination of riper age.

Listlessness and Routinism.—Just as we are all subject to Discouragement, so we are all inclined towards Stagnation. Some Religious do not seem to take the Retreat seriously till the third or fourth day. Their mind and heart are so engrossed with pet creatures, recreation, study, classwork, business-matters, that they lose the first and, in a sense, the most important part of the Retreat in Listlessness, Frivolity, and Distraction. “This is the hour for us to rise

from sleep." We must shake off this spiritual torpor, this baneful lethargy, and get to work at once. We must by all means make a good start and give ourselves wholly to solitude, silence, recollection, punctuality, and prayer. To lose our time is silly, to despise the grace of God is sinful.

Other Religious, again, lead an existence that is largely mechanical and almost purely natural, in one word, Routinary. They perform their duties, either because they have to or because they like to, but superficially, without any desire of perfection. To practise some extra penance, to make an extra visit to the Blessed Sacrament, seldom or never enters their head. Such persons are likely to enter upon the Retreat from no other motive than that of inevitable necessity, and to pass the entire eight days without making the least exertion. Unless we resolutely cast off this fatal Routinism, we cannot hope either for consolation in these Spiritual Exercises or for perseverance in our Holy Vocation. We ought to consider that to every tepid and slothful Religious Christ addresses this solemn warning: "Because you are neither hot nor cold, I will begin to vomit you out of My mouth."

Servility and Cowardice.—Occasionally there are found Religious who enter upon the annual Retreat with a somewhat uneasy conscience, and their main object is to recover peace of soul by means of a general confession in the course of the second or third day. Once that is over, they flag in their exertions and the rest of the Retreat possesses little or no interest for them. Usually they also entertain a more or less definite notion that holiness was never intended for them or that saints would be somewhat out of place in this modern age of industrial progress and

commercial expansion. These persons forget that the only way to insure permanent peace of conscience is to work with might and main at their sanctification, at the mortification of their unruly passions, at the imitation of Christ our Lord. In fact, by not cultivating a true purpose to amend their conduct and a firm will to avoid proximate occasions, they even incur a risk of rendering their confession sacrilegious through lack of sincerity. Now, what makes them so short-sighted and earthly-minded is their Cowardice.

But the worst Disposition of all would be a spirit of Pride prompting a Religious to think that he has no need of so much prayer, or to take it for granted that he cannot learn anything from this Retreat, or even to criticize, reject, and condemn the exhortations, counsels, and warnings of the Director. Without making much account of his natural qualifications, we should listen to his words with humility, attention, and eagerness. Unless we have a supernatural regard for the Priest appointed to guide us through this Retreat, we shall derive from it but little fruit, even if he were as learned and holy as St. Alphonsus Liguori or St. Ignatius Loyola.

In conclusion, then, let us ask ourselves: "How should I wish to have made this Retreat if it were to be my last? if I were to die within a month?" That is the way we will strive to make it, with the grace of God; namely, with genuine Fervor in recollection, in prayer, and in obedience.

Third Point. The One Essential Disposition to Make a good Retreat.

This Disposition is nothing else than a Firm Determination to draw from these Spiritual Exercises the greatest possible Benefit.

The holy Founder of Clairvaux, in the early days of his noviceship, used to spur himself on with this question: "Bernard, for what purpose did you come here?" Of all occasions none surely can be more appropriate than the present one to ask myself after the same manner: "Why did I forsake the world, my relatives, my home, my earthly prospects? Why did I become a Religious?" Was it not to sanctify myself and to save my soul; to live only for Jesus, my Spouse, and to have God for my All?

Now, in order to carry out my original intention and to become entirely possessed by the love of Christ, what I actually need is the sincere Will to make during these few days of prayer and solitude all the progress I can and not to lose the smallest particle of the graces so liberally offered me by my Adorable Savior. Accordingly, I ought to take a manly Resolution of entering upon the Retreat, this very instant, with my whole heart and mind, intent on nothing but the work of my sanctification and salvation. This Disposition, no doubt, is far beyond our human weakness; but, being Indispensable for our Perseverance, it is placed within everybody's reach. Hence I must strive for it and beg for it with all the energy of my soul. If, however, I feel the opposition of Nature or fear the molestation of Satan, it would be well to second the promptings of Grace by performing this very evening some little act of penance. For, I must remember, this Determination is absolutely required to make a good Retreat. Without it, indeed, it were useless to begin.

But how can we tell whether we really have this Essential Disposition? It is easily recognized at any time by these two effects. First, a genuine docility in listening to the voice of our Divine Master whenever

He will deign to teach us through the medium of His creatures; and second, a diligent effort to apply at once to our own spiritual condition, to the actual needs of our soul, whatever we may learn in these holy Exercises.

Again, if I am really determined to make the greatest possible progress, to reap from this Retreat all the fruit I can, it is evident that I must be ready to make any sacrifice that God in His Wisdom and Love may demand. Hence, this Firm Determination, conceived in my inmost heart, should find its natural expression in a Sincere Act of Self-Oblation to God my Lord, that, especially during this Retreat, He may deign to dispose of me entirely as He pleases: a humble and fervent offering of my body and my soul, but particularly of my own will, so apt to go astray to my own injury and misery, while God can will only what is good, my peace on earth and my bliss in heaven. All the advantages, therefore, will be for myself; though not for myself alone. For on this Retreat will depend not only my own sanctification and salvation, but also, according to the inscrutable designs of God, the sanctification and salvation of many others.

I ought, then, to make this offering with great Affection, considering that, in spite of my many infidelities, He should allow me, invite me, nay, even command me to make this holy Retreat; with boundless Confidence, for though "I can do nothing of myself," especially nothing that is hard to human nature, "yet I can do all things in Him Who strengthens me"; with the utmost Generosity, knowing that the more liberal one shows himself towards the Divine Majesty, so much the more liberal he shall also find God towards him. Since my Adorable Savior has been so Good, so Loving, so Merciful towards me all along,

while I was so niggardly, so ungrateful, so faithless towards Him, what favors will He not shower down upon me, if I really give myself to Him by this Firm Determination and Total Self-Oblation?

Cóloquies with my Holy Patrons, that I may imitate them in their fervor and generosity; with the Blessed Angels, that I may share in their recollection and love; with my Heavenly Mother, Mary, that I may pass these few days after the manner in which she used to live at Nazareth, in the intimate society of Jesus, her Divine Son; lastly, with my Adorable Lord and Savior, that I may fully respond to His gracious invitation, "Come to Me all you that labor and are heavy-burdened, and I will refresh you." I will beg, beseech, implore, conjure Him, by the sufferings of His Immaculate Mother and by the torments He bore for me on the Cross, that during this Retreat I may apply myself with my entire energy to the sanctification and salvation of my soul; that every day and every hour I may spend wholly with Him and for Him, in silence, solitude, and recollection.—I will conclude with the Our Father.

FOUNDATION, FIRST PART

Introductory Remarks.—If our past Retreats have sometimes failed to produce any lasting fruit, this was probably owing to one or other of two causes. Either we applied ourselves only during the first two or three days, or else we began to apply ourselves only after the first two or three days. In any case such failure has presumably been due to our neglecting and resisting, to some extent, the grace of God. This time let us enter upon the Retreat with the right disposition, that is, with an earnest desire, or rather a firm determination, to derive from these Spiritual Exercises the greatest possible Benefit, to get out of them all the Good we can.

Subject of this Meditation.—The “Principle and Foundation”, namely, that principle, that simple and evident truth, which forms the foundation of the whole spiritual life, of all asceticism: a supreme maxim for the intellect and at the same time a solid basis for the will. The first part is stated by St. Ignatius in these terms: “Man was created to praise, reverence, and serve God our Lord, and by this means to save his soul; but the other things on the face of the earth were created for man’s sake, to help him attain the End or Object for which he was created.”

Composition of Place.—Heaven opened above me and hell yawning under my feet; also myself placed

on this earth, halfway between heaven and hell, and saying to myself: "For all eternity I shall be either in heaven enjoying the bliss of God, or else in hell suffering the torments of Satan; and it depends on me alone, which of these two conditions will be my lot within a few years, perhaps within a few months, weeks, or days; it depends on me alone whether I am to gain so great a good or to incur so great an evil." How true! How certain! How appalling!

Petition.—What is the particular need of my soul with regard to this awful alternative? Light to know clearly, to realize intimately the supreme importance of this affair, my salvation and sanctification, as well as strength to adopt resolutely all the means that will most surely bring it to a successful issue. This, then, I must implore with all the energy of my being, with the utmost earnestness and confidence.

First Point. The End of Man in This Life.

God is my Creator. Let me briefly recall the Existence of God, His Eternal Being, His Infinite Perfection. By His Free Will under the guidance of His Supreme Wisdom, He made me out of nothing; my body, indirectly, through my parents and ancestors back to Adam and Eve and even to the beginning of the physical universe; my soul, directly, only a few years ago. Of myself, then, I am nothing; and without God I should still be nothing. At every moment of my actual existence I am preserved and sustained by the same creative act of Almighty God.

Therefore, by the very essence of my being, I entirely belong to God, much more, immeasurably more, than a vessel belongs to the potter who made it; I

completely depend on God, incomparably more than any slave could depend on his master. God is the Sole and Sovereign Lord of my life, of my body, of my soul, of my senses, of my faculties, of everything that may be called mine. I am by nature His servant, His possession. He is my All. How this conviction ought to fill me with delight!

But what is more, God made me to His image and likeness. This is true even of my body, for man is the crowning glory of the visible universe, but particularly is this true of my soul; a spiritual and immortal being, endowed with a mind capable of knowing truth, of having certainty, and under the necessity of accepting truth as soon as sufficiently manifested; and endowed with a will capable of loving goodness, free to determine its own action, yet under the necessity of ever striving after happiness. Consequently, my soul has been created by God in such a condition as to be capable of making constant progress, of becoming more and more perfect, while here on earth. I am placed in this world to labor at my own perfection. This present existence is, as it were, but the first hour of my creation; it is only the dawn of my life; yet how glorious! What, then, will be the everlasting noon? For "the path of the just, as a shining light, increases even unto perfect day."

What was God's motive in Creating me? God created me, as I already considered, by an infinitely wise and absolutely free choice. Not having the slightest need of me, He called me into being out of pure goodness. Nevertheless He created me for a definite object, and this object could be none other than Himself. As the supremely Skilful Artist, He could not create me except for His own Extrinsic Glory, which is to be attained in the perfection of my mind

by knowledge, of my will by love, and of my whole being by happiness. He made me necessarily for Himself, not because of any exigency or deficiency, but because of His Sovereign Excellence. His Ineffable Goodness, that I might reflect and manifest His own Unlimited Perfection, in my mind, in my will, and in my whole being. This, then, is my Ultimate End both in this world and in the next. Hence St. Paul exhorted the Corinthians in these words: "Whatever you do, do all things for the glory of God."

God also supplied me with all the means to work out this sublime purpose, and the use of these means constitutes my Proximate End in this life. In other words, I have been placed on this earth, that I might more and more perfect in myself the Image and Likeness of God: that with my mind I might Praise Him; acknowledge Him, study His Divine Attributes, investigate His Gracious Designs, and at the same time realize my manifold limitations, my own nothingness: that with my will I might Revere Him; love His Transcendent Beauty and Infinite Holiness, submit and conform myself in all things to His Fatherly Providence, and especially worship Him by faith, hope, and charity: that with my whole being I might Serve Him; accomplish His Adorable Will in all things, at all times, under all circumstances, as intelligently and affectionately as possible, whether it be expressed by way of Commandment or Counsel or Example. By devoting myself to the fulfilment of this threefold task—so beautifully expressed in the first three petitions of the Our Father: "Hallowed be Thy name; Thy kingdom come; Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven"—I shall be enabled to live, not for myself, a mere nothing, but for God, the Supreme Good. I am dwelling temporarily on this

earth to fulfil the office of a Heavenly Spirit; I am already now to exercise what is afterwards to constitute my everlasting bliss. My entire existence in time and eternity is to be one of loving adoration: of unreserved dedication and irrevocable consecration of my mind, my will, and my whole being to God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.

It is this End—this Praise, Reverence, and Service of the Most High—which alone can make me truly great and good and holy. Hence, to live up to it is for me a matter of paramount importance. This is the only thing I am made for; namely, to know, to love, and to serve God. This is to be my only occupation, my only care, my only joy. All the rest is utter vanity.

Again, this End is so noble that nothing loftier can be conceived for any creature; it is an End common to men and angels; it is the End of the Blessed Virgin Mary, “the Handmaid of the Lord,” it is the End of Christ our Savior, called in Holy Writ “the Servant of God.”

Lastly, this End is so essential that to it everything else in man ought to be subordinated. Whatever, therefore, is done in keeping with this End is wise, just, and honorable; whatever is done apart from this End is foolish, wrong, and disgraceful. For God has a sovereign and inalienable right to this homage of my intellect by Praise, to this homage of my heart by Reverence, to this homage of my whole being, body and soul, by Service. We all realize what it means to be under a moral obligation. What should we think of a perfidious man, of a husband, a soldier, a servant that proves false to his main duties? What, then, should we think of one who, repudiating the essential allegiance he owes to God his Creator, says,

“I will not serve”? What duty can there be more sacred than this one, which is the sole foundation of every other duty? What conduct can there be more senseless, more criminal, more hateful than that of a rational creature, positively rebelling against its Sovereign Lord?

Here we may note how Prayer combines Praise, Reverence, and Service. We cannot do more for the Glory of God than by Prayer; and all the rest is useless except it be preceded, accompanied, and followed by Prayer. Prayer should prompt, animate, and fructify all we do. Accordingly, St. Paul wrote to the Thessalonians, “Pray without ceasing.” It is often only when through infirmity or old age we are incapacitated for other duties, that we begin to lead really useful lives by means of Prayer. But all along, from the very outset of our noviceship, we should give ourselves with the utmost eagerness and energy to every exercise of Prayer.

The Praise, Reverence, and Service which we have considered thus far, being referred immediately to God, may rightly be called Direct. But there is also a Praise, Reverence, and Service that may be called Indirect, which consists in acknowledging God, loving God, and serving God, in our neighbor as His representative by Charity, and especially in our Superiors as His vicegerents by Obedience. In a certain sense this Indirect Praise, Reverence, and Service is more practical, because we do not see God, but we do see our fellow men. In fact, no one can fail to observe that Obedience, demanding as it does the complete sacrifice, the continual consecration of our mind, our will, and our whole being, really combines the truest Praise, the deepest Reverence, and the best Service. On the other hand, if instead of esteeming,

cherishing, and assisting our neighbor, if instead of revering, loving, and obeying our Superior, we have been contemptuous, spiteful, and rebellious, have thought, spoken, and done evil against these special representatives and actual vicegerents of Almighty God; we can readily infer from this what has been our Direct Praise, Reverence, and Service.

As a Religious, I may consider, besides, that I owe Praise, Reverence, and Service, in the spirit of my holy Institute, that I should practise Prayer, Charity, and Obedience in accordance with my Rules. To this well-defined Praise, Reverence, and Service, I have been allowed to bind myself by the Vows: an extraordinary grace which renders it so easy for me to work unceasingly at my own sanctification, at my own perfection, at God's Greater Glory. Hence, how highly I should esteem my Vocation!

In conclusion, I am not created to have my own way, to follow my whims, to indulge my moods, to act as I please, or to be my own master. To do something merely without regard to the Divine Will is inordinate, because it is beside my one only purpose in life; but to do something positively against the Divine Will is sinful. Evidently, I must shun and hate not only sin, but also inordination, which leads to sin. If an object does not answer its purpose we call it useless and throw it aside or else destroy it. Similarly, if a man does not fulfil the End for which God made him, the only End for which God could make him, that man will be cast out as useless into utter darkness, into everlasting fire. These reflections should fill me with sincere regret and confusion for my past shortcomings and prompt me to dedicate myself anew to the perfect accomplishment of the Will of my Adorable Maker. How diligently I should

strive henceforth to eliminate all disorderly imaginations, all frivolous thoughts, all worldly desires, all idle words, all hasty actions. Assuredly, without strict custody of my senses and continual mortification of my passions, it will be out of the question for me to correspond to my Purpose or to find relish in my Prayer.

Second Point. My Proximate End in the Next Life.

My Service is to Benefit myself. Among men the service rendered by an employee or an inferior is for the benefit of the employer or the superior. The contrary happens when we serve God. No creature, in fact, can by its exertion afford Him any intrinsic utility, for in Himself He is infinitely rich and good and happy. But God desires us to labor in His service that we may merit a recompense, that He may be able to reward us, that He may bestow upon us a crown of Everlasting Felicity. And the more excellent our Service, the more glorious also will be our Recompense.

There are, we may say, three degrees in the Divine Service. Ordinary Service goes only so far as not to break any Commandment that is binding under pain of mortal sin. Better Service, of course, would be given by avoiding also venial sin. But the Best Service that can be rendered to God consists in accomplishing His Adorable Will, even when not to do so would involve no sin, even when no strict Precept or Prohibition is laid upon us, but when He simply manifests to us His Good Pleasure by way of Counsel or Example.

Amongst men, the first and second kinds of service would not be accounted such at all. What employer

would think that his workmen are fulfilling their duty, merely because they do not kill him or any other member of his family, or do not rob him of all his money, or do not set fire to his house and shops? What master would consider his servant to be entitled to any wages, simply because he has not done any injury to the children, nor stolen anything from the storeroom, nor quarreled with his fellow servants? Yet God, the Lord of Infinite Majesty, rewards, as if it were a great and signal service, the very avoidance of sin, mortal and venial. How liberally, then, will He not reward those who have offered to accomplish His Holy Will, however hard may be the task, at the merest intimation, without any positive command: those who strive to give Him the very Best and most Perfect Service? And is it not precisely to this form of Service that we have bound ourselves by our Religious Vows?

How does God intend to Reward my Service? Reason tells us that service calls for reward, just as neglect of service merits punishment. God created us in order that after praising, revering, and serving Him in this world, He might make us eternally happy in the next, by enabling us to know and love Him without any hindrance, without any intermission. Hence no earthly good,—no wealth, nor learning, nor enjoyment, nor prominence,—nor all earthly goods together, can completely satisfy man's desire for happiness. God alone can fill our hearts; in God alone our souls can rest.

The highest reward, however, we could naturally expect would consist in the perpetual contemplation and enjoyment of God, the Sovereign Goodness and Beauty, through some created image of the Divine Essence. But, as we know by revelation, God in His

wonderful love has gone much further. Not satisfied with granting us this natural bliss, He desires to admit us to His own intimate society and to fill us with His own ineffable happiness. "Behold what manner of charity the Father has bestowed upon us that we should be called and should be the sons of God." By Sanctifying Grace we have actually been adopted into the Divine Family, and by Beatific Vision we shall forever share in the Divine Life, forever be immersed in that infinite Ocean of Love, forever be inebriated with torrents of delight.

This is Supernatural Salvation, a reward such as no eye has seen, no ear has heard, and no human heart has ever conceived; yet most certain, because promised us by Him Who is infinitely Faithful, Liberal, and Powerful: an Everlasting, Perfect, Divine Good. All the labors and even all the sufferings of this present life would be nothing in comparison with that unfading Crown of Glory. But I must merit it by my voluntary Service; I must be resolved to win it at any cost.

God, on His part, desires most earnestly to bring about my Salvation. To protect me against my own weakness, He threatens me with everlasting punishment, if I should despise so inconceivable a favor, if I should refuse my cooperation to merit so magnificent a reward. Hence, there is no other course open to me: I must either be eternally blissful with God, the Saints, and the Angels in Heaven; or else be eternally wretched with Satan, the Demons, and the Reprobates in Hell. There the soul, though irresistibly drawn towards perfect happiness, will remain completely isolated from the Sovereign Good, and consequently be filled with sadness, devoured with remorse, and overwhelmed with despair. And this pain of loss will

be accompanied by a corresponding pain of sense, both afflictions to be unchangeable and endless.

But, again, God desires my Supernatural Salvation so vehemently that He has deigned to become Man, to labor, to suffer, and to die on the Cross, in the deepest ignominy, in the most frightful torments, in order to atone for my sins and to purchase for me abundant grace. It is this same ineffable longing to make me participate in His own beatitude that prompted Him to share my earthly exile in the Adorable Sacrament of the Altar. And to attain His loving purpose still more surely, He has bestowed on me, notwithstanding my sinfulness, the special favor of a Religious Vocation. In view of all this, my confidence should simply know no bounds.

This, then, is the plain but momentous truth I must strive by all means to bring home to myself: Supernatural Salvation is the one thing necessary. If I save my soul, my life will be a splendid and everlasting success; if not, a total and irreparable failure. "For what does it profit a man if he gain the whole world and suffer the loss of his own soul?" And how am I to save my soul? By praising, revering, and serving God; by doing His Adorable Will; by constantly and strenuously laboring at my own Perfection. To this, therefore, I must apply myself with all my energy. I must obey the Commandments; I must keep my Vows; I must observe my Rules; I must practise Charity; I must follow the inspirations of Divine Grace. Yet, after all, how easy it is to sanctify and save my soul, in comparison with the difficulty of acquiring earthly goods, perishable wealth, and empty honors! How easy especially with the abundant helps placed constantly at my disposal in the Religious State!

Third Point. The End or Object of Other Creatures in Relation to Me.

Everything outside my own Personality is Intended to be a Help. This includes besides my own faculties, my own senses, and my own limbs, also whatever persons I come in contact with, whatever objects fall under my notice, whatever circumstances affect my earthly existence. As far as I am concerned, they were all created for my sake, in order to aid me in reaching my End, in fulfilling my purpose; namely, the praise, reverence, and service of God in this life, and the salvation of my immortal soul in the next. With this in mind the Apostle says, "To those who love God all things work together unto good." But how can they help me? By contemplation, by use, and by abstinence. Of these three ways the first is most noble, the second most common, and the third most necessary, inasmuch as neglect of the third means excess in the second and unfitness for the first. How admirable God's Goodness is, considering that every one of these countless creatures is a token of His personal love and tender solicitude for me, His possession, His servant, His child! They were created for me, to help me save my soul; not I for them, to seek in them my happiness. None, in fact, could satisfy the boundless cravings of my heart made for God, Who alone can fill its capacity.

To Help me is, in my regard, their Only Purpose. I am not the absolute master of any one of these creatures, however close the relation in which it stands to my person. They are given me by God, not for my selfish enjoyment, but for my rational employment. I am not to use them or to discard them just as I please, in compliance with my momentary impulses. But I am under strict obligation to avail my-

self of them for the purpose which God has in bestowing them upon me, namely, to praise Him, to revere Him, to serve Him, and thus to merit Supernatural Salvation. Such is the plain dictate of reason and faith. If I use creatures aright I shall be rewarded; if not, I shall be punished. God being an All-Wise Administrator, observes most carefully what use I am making of His creatures; He will soon call me to a minute account, and then either admit me to everlasting happiness in Heaven, or else condemn me to unending affliction in Hell. Practically, therefore, everything depends on whether or not I use creatures according to God's Adorable Will. Merely not to use a gift, to hide it as the slothful servant of the Gospel hid his talent, would be ungrateful. So I was, every time I did not avail myself of an actual grace, every time I neglected to follow an inspiration of the Holy Ghost. Another inference I should draw, is that I must never blame anything, any person, or any circumstance, for my failings and my sins. All this is sheer self-deception. The cause of my faults lies wholly and solely in my own perverse will, in my own pride.

We may note, in conclusion, that, with regard to this Principle and Foundation, responsible men may be divided into three categories. First, those who have wilfully turned their minds away from the knowledge of their Creator and of their own End; secondly, those who still know God and their duties but deliberately make a bad use of creatures; thirdly, those who intimately relish these fundamental truths and shape their whole conduct in perfect compliance with the Divine Will: Infidels, Worldlings, and Saints; but among the latter incomparably more holy than all the others, the Blessed Virgin Mary.

Colloquy with God, my Heavenly Father, giving expression to my intense gratitude for all His favors, to my profound regret for my numberless shortcomings, and to my firm purpose, henceforth to live, think, speak, and labor only for the praise, reverence, and service of His Infinite Majesty, seeking constantly to immolate myself and all I have for His Divine Glory, using everything that is intended to help me in strict accordance with His Holy Will, but never usurping any creature for my own selfish satisfaction.—At the end I will recite the Our Father.

OUR SPIRITUAL DUTIES

It is a commonplace in asceticism, that the inner life is the only source of supernatural efficiency for the conversion of sinners and the sanctification of souls. Without it, Religious would be the worst of hypocrites. And the inner life is nourished by Prayer, by affectionate converse with the Most High. Accordingly, in this first Conference, we shall briefly consider the best way of performing some of our principal Spiritual Duties; namely, Meditation, Vocal Prayer, General Examen, Particular Examen, and Confession.

Meditation.—The Subject of our morning Meditation should be selected and arranged overnight. It ought to be adapted to our actual needs and trials, since otherwise our Prayer, not dealing with the present state of our soul, will lack an indispensable element of earnestness. Hence, if we find the matter proposed unsuitable or inapplicable, if we cannot see in it anything that will help us pray, we may prepare our own points, taking as the subject of our Meditation something which we know by experience is likely to rouse our soul and inflame our heart; for instance, the words, actions, or sufferings of our Adorable Savior, the consequences of Sin, the motives of Contrition, the goodness of God, the love of Christ in the Holy Eucharist, the greatness of the Blessed Virgin, our Mother. However, we should not deem a subject unsuitable or inapplicable simply because it does not

appeal to us forcibly from the start. A manly effort to meditate on what has been proposed will often, with the help of grace, make us discover a rich gold-mine where before we saw but an arid waste. This much is certain: our morning Meditation will never succeed, unless overnight we make a careful preparation of the matter, and get up a thorough interest in the fruit.

Besides, it is necessary to observe the so-called "Additions." These are recommendations or directions given by St. Ignatius, which we should diligently comply with, if we desire to make a good Meditation. While seemingly trivial, it would be difficult to overestimate their importance. Before falling asleep, we should think, for the space of a Hail Mary, of the time when we have to rise and of the object for which we intend to do so, briefly recapitulating the Meditation we are to make; namely, the Three Preludes—the subject-matter or the historical fact, the composition of place, and the petition,—together with the Points. In the morning, we should get up instantly at the first sound of the bell, say some fervent prayer—if possible after kneeling down and kissing the floor—being determined not to lose one moment of the precious time granted us for the exercise of Divine Love, in thought and desire, in labor and suffering. Immediately after this, while dressing, we should resolve to attend to our Particular Examen during the forenoon, and then we should once more recall the Meditation we are about to make, as we did overnight, but now also strive to stir up in our soul appropriate sentiments and dispositions.

These directions are simple and easy enough; but the unfortunate fact is that we are all very much hampered in their observance by laziness, frivolity,

and worldliness. Why should we have to accuse ourselves so frequently of being distracted during Meditation and other Spiritual Duties? Because we neglect to prepare our soul for conversing with our Creator. And why can we not approach each Exercise of Prayer with real earnestness and give to it our whole mind and heart, like sensible, wide-awake men of business? It is because our lives are not sufficiently sincere, consistent, and thorough. It is because we forget that, what makes us Religious, is not the habit of serge, but the habit of self-crucifixion.

Next comes the "Ingress," or the entrance upon our Meditation; and this too is a matter of great importance. We must by all means strive to make an energetic start, with the firm determination not only to pray but also to succeed in prayer. What punctuality, eagerness, humility, confidence, and fervor we should bring to any intercourse with God, considering on the one hand our utter unworthiness, our paramount obligations, our absolute helplessness, and on the other hand His ineffable condescension, His inexhaustible mercy, His boundless liberality, His sovereign majesty, His infinite loveliness! The Ingress comprises the following acts: Presence of God, Preparatory Prayer, Composition of Place, and Petition.

As to placing ourselves in the Presence of God, we may use any suitable method or reflection; but St. Ignatius recommends that, one or two steps from the place of kneeling, we should stand for about the space of an Our Father, lifting up our mind and heart to God and considering how He looks down on us as about to meditate. The following prayer may be helpful to fix our attention: "I will speak to the Lord, though I am but dust and ashes. O my God, I believe that Thou art everywhere present. All things

are naked and open to Thy eyes. Thou seest my weakness, my nothingness, my manifold sinfulness. Thou lookest down upon me with pity and with love." Then we should make an act of inward adoration and outward humiliation, saying for instance, "I bow down before Thee with my body and soul and worship Thee. Oh! teach me to pray."

The Preparatory Prayer should be a confident supplication for the divine assistance and may be worded more or less like this: "O Lord, my God, look graciously down upon Thy creature, the work of Thy hands and grant me grace, that all my thoughts, desires, and actions, particularly during this meditation, may be purely directed to the praise and glory of Thy Infinite Majesty." It might be well now and then to vary the form of the Preparatory Prayer, especially if this would help us to make it more thoughtfully and fervently. The Composition of Place consists in seeing with the eyes of the imagination the spot where what we are going to meditate on was enacted. Sometimes this ought to be taken in a metaphorical sense, as in the Exercises on Sin, where sin is considered to reside in our own soul. A few seconds should suffice to form this mental picture. The Petition, finally, consists in asking of God our Lord, with all the intensity of our will, the particular grace suggested by the subject-matter. St. Ignatius constantly takes care to remind us that the grace we beg for in the Petition should be the actual object of our earnest desires; and common experience bears out the wisdom of this precaution.

We are now ready to begin the Meditation proper. The one purpose of Mental Prayer, we must remember, is converse with the Most High, union of our soul with the Infinite Goodness. The labor of the

mind in discussing the subject is intended to lead up to this converse, this union; but if the Holy Ghost should move our heart at once to pray, so much the better. For spiritual union is consummated, not in sublime knowledge, but in supernatural love. Hence we must be careful not to neglect the end for the means. Meditation should consist mainly of ardent emotions prompted by the consideration of the matter proposed in the points, and of fervent petitions arising from the remembrance of our past shortcomings or the realization of our present needs, both of which—emotions and petitions—we should express in Colloquies, or conversations, with God our Lord, the Blessed Virgin, and the Saints, at any time during our Meditation but particularly towards the end. It is imperative that we do not look for novelty or excitement, for something on which to feed our natural curiosity or morbid sentimentality. Pious selfishness is just as much a hindrance to Prayer as spiritual apathy.

But what if we are distracted? Of course, we must suppose that these distractions are not wilful, that is, neither deliberately entertained nor voluntarily caused; for if they were, our Meditation would be only a pretense, and we had much better read a useful book or sweep a staircase. But we entered Religion to become Saints and for nothing else. We resolved long ago to live for this one purpose; and hence, unless we want to take back our offering and to cheat ourselves of our reward, we ought to make the best possible use of all the means that will enable us to reach Sanctity, the first and chiefest of which is Prayer. Again, while our distractions are perhaps not directly wilful they may be so indirectly. This is the case when they arise from some unmortified at-

tachment or repugnance, or from some immoderate desire or apprehension; and the obvious remedy to be applied to such troubles consists in resolutely sacrificing these tendencies together with their objects.

Yet, even though we are really anxious to make a good Meditation, our thoughts may sometimes persist in wandering. What are we to do? Generally, the best thing is to persevere humbly in bringing our mind back to the Subject. However, we may also turn to the consideration of the Sacred Passion or the Blessed Eucharist; or else we may make acts of faith, hope, love, humility, and contrition, according to the Second Method of Prayer, dwelling on each thought and reflecting upon the meaning of the words as long as this affords us some spiritual relish; or again, we may recite the Our Father, the Hail Mary, a psalm, a hymn, an invocation, slowly and meditatively, according to the Third Method of Prayer.

But, the main thing is not to give up and, even if we cannot pray at all, at least to keep our souls in the Divine Presence, patiently waiting for a heavenly favor, in the spirit of the Syrophenician woman who, when our Savior told her, "It is not good to take the bread of the children and to cast it to the dogs," humbly remonstrated, "Yea, Lord, for the pups also eat of the crumbs that fall from the table of their masters." For our encouragement, we should bear in mind that every distraction duly resisted and combated, increases our merit and hastens our progress. Both desolation and consolation are intended by God for our good, and it is up to us to make the right use of these divine visitations. In desolation, let us shun despondency and rouse our confidence; in consolation, let us beware of self-complacency and apply ourselves to humility.

As to drowsiness, if habitual, the cause should be investigated and as far as possible removed; if occasional, we should try to rouse ourselves thoroughly, not only spiritually but also physically. But whatever difficulties we may have to contend with during our Meditation, in any case towards the end, we should renew our petition for the desired fruit, making a special effort to pray intently and concluding our Colloquy, according to the directions of St. Ignatius, if single, with the Lord's Prayer, but if triple, with the Hail Mary, the Anima Christi, and the Our Father.

A Review of our Meditation is indispensable, if we desire to secure its full benefit. By searching into our failures it teaches us also how to overcome our difficulties and correct our shortcomings. If we find that we have been at fault, we should impose on ourselves some suitable penalty. This Review, or "Reflection," can be made at any hour in the morning—though breakfast time would generally seem the most convenient—for about ten or fifteen minutes, and may be very appropriately concluded with a visit to the Blessed Sacrament. For, after all, it is from the Sacred Heart of Jesus that we must strive to obtain the grace of meditating with fervor and with fruit.

Besides Common Mental Prayer, or Ordinary Meditation, there is Affective Prayer and the Prayer of Simplicity. In Affective Prayer the reasoning is done more easily and rapidly and excites affections proportionately more intense and efficacious, which consequently take up the greater part of our Meditation. The Repetition of previous Meditations affords a good opportunity to practise Affective Prayer. But when these affections become more simple, that is, less varied and less interrupted or impeded by mental con-

siderations, they may constitute what is usually termed the Prayer of Simplicity, but has been designated also as Ordinary or Acquired Contemplation.

Yet, besides helping us to conceive and recall His Presence, as God does in Meditation, He may deign to give us an experimental knowledge or spiritual sensation of His Presence. When this occurs more or less habitually, the soul has entered upon a higher form of Prayer, which is generally called Mystical Contemplation or Mystic Union, but is often referred to simply as Contemplation, particularly where there is no danger of misunderstanding. This admirable kind of Prayer may be described as a condition of lively faith, implicit trust, and ardent love, produced in the soul, under a special inspiration of God, by those gifts of the Holy Ghost which correspond to the three theological virtues. Hence, like these and other supernatural favors, it cannot be reached through our own exertion; though we should prepare for it by generous detachment and beg for it with humble importunity.

Just as there are successive stages in Discursive Meditation or, as it has sometimes been styled, Natural Prayer; so there are several ascending degrees in what is manifestly Supernatural Prayer, or Mystical Contemplation; namely, Incomplete, Complete, Ecstatic, and Transforming Union. This last favor, approaches on earth most closely to the crowning grace of heaven, the perfect participation in the Divine Nature by Beatific Vision. There can be no doubt that, if we are diligent in the performance of our daily Meditation and unremitting in the practice of complete Self-Denial, God will, in His own good time invite us to a mode of intercourse more humble, more delightful, more profitable, and also more sublime.

What a pity that this divine invitation is sometimes not heeded through narrow notions or sheer ignorance of the ways of Mental Prayer.

Vocal Prayer.—The recitation of prayers, whether performed in common or gone through in private, would hardly deserve to rank as a Spiritual Duty, unless it be accompanied by a vivid realization of the presence of God and a confident longing for the favors of Heaven. Hence it is very important to stir up these dispositions before beginning any Vocal Prayer. How could any one presume to address the Almighty with less attention and regard than one is expected to manifest in conversing with his fellow men? Oh, let us never rest satisfied with a merely mechanical recitation of sacred formulas. While our lips pronounce the words of worship, praise, or supplication, our heart should strive either to relish their deep significance or to expose its spiritual needs. A good will and a little industry will go far to infuse fervor into even our most ordinary acts of devotion, such as reciting the angelus or saying grace before and after meals. But though it may nevertheless happen that we experience little or no relish in the performance of Vocal Prayer, yet every detail of our outward behavior should bespeak reverence for the Divine Majesty. Accordingly, we should be very careful to articulate distinctly every syllable, to take up the responses neither too soon nor too late, and to refrain from such unseemly manifestations of weariness as lazy postures and audible yawns.

General Examen.—The General Examen is an Exercise of Prayer chiefly bearing on our sins and imperfections and commonly made twice a day, about

noon and before retiring, for the space of fifteen minutes. After placing ourselves, as usual, in the Presence of God, we should first give Him thanks for all His Favors, but particularly for those received during the previous part of the day : the Father loving me, creating me, and preserving me in His glorious and delightful service; the Son immolating Himself for me, bestowing on me His own Mother, and daily giving Himself to me for my spiritual nourishment in anticipation of heaven; the Holy Ghost dwelling in me, sanctifying me, and constantly urging me on to higher perfection in accordance with my vocation.

Secondly, we should beg earnestly for Light and Grace that we may know and detest our sins. This petition, to be sure, is not always made with sufficient fervor. Yet precisely here we are facing one great obstacle to progress; we do not know ourselves, we do not recognize our faults, we do not want to see them in their real malice and baseness, we shut our eyes to them, we connive at them, we excuse and palliate them, we lay the blame for them on accidental circumstances, the conduct of others, our own fatigue, illness, and what not, and even we pride ourselves on them as if they were acts of virtue. Especially in regard to habitual sins and inordinations our mind is darkened and our will is hardened. Hence we do need much light and grace, and should make this petition with great humility and confidence.

Now, thirdly, comes the Examination proper, which ought not to demand more than three or four minutes. A very convenient way is to take up the main obligations of the Religious Life: Prayer, mental and vocal; Self-Denial, in suffering and humiliation; Fraternal Charity, in thought, speech, and action; our Vows; our Rules; our Resolutions; Di-

vine Love or Pure Intention. Else we may go through the successive hours and occupations of the preceding portion of the day, but this procedure is more open to distractions.—At this juncture we may also make our Particular Examen.

Fourthly, we should make acts of sincere Contrition, including all the sins of our past life, especially those which were more grievous or more deliberate. We should also lament with deep confusion the ugly and dangerous dispositions of our soul, of which our faults are but so many symptoms—self-esteem, self-love, sensuality, impatience, ingratitude towards God, unkindness towards our neighbor,—in other words, our actual and manifold leaning towards rebellion, our pride. After all, in this lies the only evil, the only sin: in the foolish turning away of our heart from God, in our feeble volition departing from His Holy Will. And to humble Contrition we should join suitable Satisfaction. After resolving on what we ourselves can shortly do in expiation for our numerous offenses, we may for this same end also offer up the prayers, penances, and sufferings of all fervent Religious on earth, the merits of the Saints and Angels in heaven, especially those of the Blessed Virgin Mary, and above all the infinite atonement made by Christ our Lord.

Lastly, we should renew our Determination to correct our faults, to keep our Rules, to perform our Duties, to practise our Particular Examen, with special regard to present circumstances and positive difficulties; and then conclude this General Examen with the Our Father.

Particular Examen.—Some Religious fancy that they could never acquire a virtue by the method of the

Particular Examen, that is, by a gradually increasing number of acts. They fear it would break their head to try to make daily, say a hundred acts of humility, or of charity, or of union with God. But their apprehension is entirely groundless. Worldlings surely do not break their head by making daily, not hundreds, but even thousands of useless and sinful acts in thought, word, and deed. All habits, and especially good ones, are formed slowly; but once formed they enable us to make an astonishing multitude of acts with comparative ease. As to the labor of counting, it is sufficient to find out whether we have attained the proposed number of acts or, simpler still, whether we have passed a given length of time without making any at all. But what we need essentially is an ardent and inflexible will to succeed; and the mere fact of not yet having fully done so, should suffice to keep the matter fresh and interesting.

The first thing to do, therefore, is to select a Suitable Subject, some defect we desire to overcome or some virtue we wish to acquire. In deliberating about this choice we should implore the Divine guidance and avail ourselves of the counsels and admonitions of our Superiors. But this is not enough. In the next place, we must firmly make up our mind that, with the help of grace, we are going to conquer ourselves in the matter decided upon, by a diligent use of the Particular Examen. Especially when there is question of some outward fault, we must not hesitate to set a limited time for its correction. St. Ignatius graphically suggests this by rapidly diminishing lines to represent the number of failings committed on successive days of the week. Besides, we should carefully study our duties, occupations, and surroundings, with a view to the opportunities they

may offer for carrying our resolution into practice. So much for the preparation.

The real work consists in this: never to allow the subject of our Particular Examen to be entirely absent from our mind; daily to pray earnestly for diligence and energy, particularly during Mass, Communion, and Visits; to renew our resolve twice a day, namely, after rising and about noon; to note down the number of our failures likewise twice a day, namely, about noon and before retiring, or practically during the time allotted to each General Examen of Conscience; lastly, if at the end of the week we discover that, instead of making progress in the subject of our Particular Examen, we have fallen back or been guilty of negligence, to impose on ourselves some penance for the faults committed or the acts of virtue omitted, in proportion to their number. Fidelity in complying with these simple directions will infallibly insure success.

Confession.—What we are to do before Confession.—While it is most commendable to Manifest our doubts of conscience with childlike simplicity and candor to our Confessor; yet we should never Accuse ourselves of anything unless we are convinced that it is our own fault, never as long as in our inmost heart we excuse ourselves and lay the blame on something outside our own perverse will, never as long as we are not determined to overcome and correct ourselves at any cost. We cannot keep it too vividly before our mind that Confession without Contrition is of no avail, and that it is not enough to be merely impatient or disappointed at our weakness and misery. Though it is not necessary that we should shed tears of compunction, still we must be really sorry for the sins we

confess and detest them with our whole soul from supernatural motives.

Before Confession, therefore, in addition to a diligent Examination of our Conscience and a thorough Realization of our Guilt, we need an earnest Consideration of these Supernatural Motives; namely, the foulness of sin, the danger of perdition, the goodness of God. Through the neglect of these preliminaries our Confessions will necessarily become somewhat insincere, and such insincerity can never be productive of any good but, on the contrary, is certain to do harm. We must strive, then, to be Sincere: the statement of our sins should be a Real Self-Accusation, made with true Shame and Confusion at our ingratitude, our selfishness, our sensuality, our infidelity, our rebellion. It is certain that our Contrition will always be proportioned to our Confusion, and that the more intense our Contrition the more thorough will be our Amendment. We shall never correct a single fault of which we are not heartily ashamed.

How to Confess.—In making our Confession we should strive to be brief and state, as a rule, only three or four sins; the other venial faults, if we are guilty of any more, will be canceled also by the absolution, provided we are truly sorry for them. Whenever we have to confess only venial sins, or none at all as far as we can distinctly remember—in which case we should state so in all simplicity—it is advisable to add a General Accusation of the sins of our past life, mentioning that particular sin or kind of sins which fills us with deeper Confusion and is, consequently, more likely to be confessed with true and fervent Contrition. We can say, for instance, “I accuse myself also of the sins of my past life and especially of my sins of disobedience,” “anger,” “glut-

tony," "lying." In other words, unless we have good reason for acting differently, we should emphasize those sins which humble us more and confess them in the manner we find more humiliating. Thus we shall prevent this general accusation from degenerating into a mere formula. Expressions that involve a contradiction in terms, such as, "I also wish to accuse myself of the sins I have forgotten," or "I intend to include in this confession also my unknown sins," should, of course, never be used. We ought to be sorry for all our sins, but we can confess only those we know and remember. As for the Method of Confession, it is very desirable that everybody should follow the one taught in some standard Catechism approved by the entire Hierarchy of the country in which he is living.

What to do after Confession.—When the Priest tells us to renew the Act of Contrition, a good plan is to recite it in an audible whisper, somewhat after the Third Method of Prayer, that is, dwelling on the important words and realizing their meaning. Many people say the Act of Contrition, like their other vocal prayers, much too fast; and some do not say it at all but keep thinking of their Confession. As Religious, we may find it profitable to express the second part, the purpose of amendment, more or less as follows: "I firmly resolve, with the help of Thy grace, to lead a life of prayer, self-denial, and charity, to keep my holy vows, rules, and resolutions, and to apply myself to my particular examen."

For the rest, let us be simple, open, obedient, and fervent. Questions relating to Spiritual Guidance had better be asked after the Absolution; since otherwise the Priest might meanwhile forget of what we accused ourselves and be obliged to make us repeat.

But about what may we ask information in the confessional? About our imperfections, our difficulties, our temptations, our scruples, our doubts, our desires, in short, about anything that bears on our supernatural life, our spiritual progress, or our peace of mind. Let us not be hindered from opening our heart by a false sense of delicacy or by a vague fear of not being able to make ourselves understood. We should persuade ourselves that our difficulties and our experiences are the same as those of many other souls.

Spiritual Direction is practically indispensable for making progress. If we should have a Confessor that is both able and willing to guide us to higher perfection, we should practise towards him childlike openness and great docility, yet in our interviews with him be regardful of his time and sparing in our words. In this important matter, we ought simply to consider whether a Priest possesses the necessary virtue, learning, and experience. If the Ordinary Confessor should not appear to have these requisites, fervent Religious will at least try to avail themselves of the Extraordinary. Novices, however, especially in such untoward circumstances, might find it more helpful to open their heart to their Master; and even Professed Religious would often be benefited by asking counsel of their Superior or of one of their Seniors. We should deal with Superiors just as good children with affectionate parents. Many of our little doubts and difficulties could be solved in this easy fashion to our own great advantage. We should not be bashful nor reticent. We should learn to manifest our interior to those who are qualified to assist us, for thus we shall get clearer ideas about the actual condition of our soul, and sooner become capable of guiding ourselves under ordinary circumstances.

Lastly, as to the Penance, we should bear in mind that we satisfy it as soon as we carry out what has been enjoined, even though at the time we may not be thinking of our obligation. However, a sincere Desire of Amendment will urge us to perform some Additional Penance, in the shape of vocal prayers, extra visits, acts of outward self-abasement or bodily mortification. Experience teaches that corporal austerities are generally beneficial and often indispensable for the subduing of the passions. Not age or occupation, but only illness or infirmity, should make us give up the penitential exercises that have been so highly recommended by the Masters of the Spiritual Life to all who are in real earnest about their Sanctification. It is difficult to understand how any Religious training can give satisfactory results when these venerable practices are either not known or not permitted. But they should not be imposed indiscriminately nor be undertaken without the sanction of one's Confessor or Superior.

General Confession.—It is customary for Religious during the early part of the annual Retreat to make a General Confession, "a Review," from the time of their last Retreat. Provided it be made with real earnestness, this is certainly a very salutary custom. A General Confession of our entire life is to be recommended at our entrance into Religion; also at any subsequent conversion to greater fervor, owing to some extraordinary visitation of God, or to some remarkable grace of more ardent contrition; and at our admission to the final Vows. But what has been said of ordinary confessions applies likewise to General Confessions; their effect will be exactly proportional to the depth of our Confusion, that is, to the sincerity of our Self-Accusation. One should never

think of making a General Confession simply because he does not remember any longer whether he ever confessed some sin of the past, or merely because he does not feel quite satisfied about his former confessions for lack of sensible contrition and subsequent amendment.

Many wise regulations have been made by the Church to facilitate the practice of Sacramental Confession. Pope Pius X, in his decree "*Cum de sacramentalibus*," has prescribed that all members of Religious Congregations of Women should be kept acquainted with the ample faculties granted to insure their liberty of conscience. At the same time, Nuns and Sisters are to be reminded that, in availing themselves of their leave to apply for a special Confessor, they should not be swayed by human considerations but only have in view their spiritual good and their progress in virtue. By a subsequent decree in favor of Religious Orders or Congregations of Men, the Holy Apostolic See has granted to all Confessors, approved by the local Ordinaries, faculty to absolve any member even from sins reserved under censure in his Institute. However, these enlarged facilities for obtaining absolution by no means invalidate what has always been so emphatically recommended by the Masters of the spiritual life; namely, to have a fixed Confessor, to whom one's conscience should be wholly open. Those who neglect this rule, renounce the very possibility of guidance on the road to Holiness.

FOUNDATION, SECOND PART

Introductory Remarks.—In the preceding meditation we reflected on the most fundamental and far-reaching truths apprehended by the human mind in the light of reason and faith. “Man was created to praise, reverence, and serve God our Lord, and by this means to save his soul; but the other things on the face of the earth were created for man’s sake, to assist him in the prosecution of the End for which he was created.” This first part of the Principle and Foundation forcibly reminds us that just as every circumstance of our present existence is designed by God to help us serve Him and merit Heaven, so we should make His Glory and our Salvation the sole object of all our thoughts, desires, and actions, the one aim of our whole life; and that to act otherwise, even for a single moment, would be eminently unjust, ungrateful, and unreasonable.

In the second part of the Principle and Foundation, St. Ignatius deduces some practical consequences from the truths stated in the first part. “Hence it follows, that man must make use of creatures in so far as this will help him to reach his End and must abstain from them in so far as their use would hinder him from reaching his End. Therefore, we have to make ourselves indifferent towards all creatures, as far as it is left to our free will to do so and not forbidden; in such wise that on our part we do not wish for health rather than sickness, for wealth rather than poverty, for honor rather than dishonor, for a long

life rather than an early death, and so in all other things; desiring and choosing, under any circumstances, what is most conducive to the End for which we have been created."

Subject of this Meditation.—Three important Conclusions drawn from the fundamental truths considered in the First Part of the Foundation.

Composition of Place.—Heaven opened above me, a magnificent throne of bliss, and hell yawning under my feet, a narrow cell of fire; also myself standing on this earth, halfway between heaven and hell, and saying to myself: "For all eternity I shall be either in heaven enjoying the glory of the Blessed, or else in hell suffering the torments of the Reprobate, and it depends on me alone, which of these two conditions will be my lot within a few years, perhaps even within a few hours; it depends on me alone whether I am to gain so great a good or to incur so great an evil."

Petition.—Light to realize more intimately the supreme importance of my sanctification and salvation, as well as to understand more clearly what means will bring it to a successful issue; also strength to resolve on using these means perseveringly until death.

First Point. First Conclusion: "Hence it follows that man must make use of creatures in so far as this will help him to reach his End, and must abstain from them in so far as their use would hinder him from reaching his End"; namely, the praise, reverence, and service of God while on earth, and the possession of God hereafter in heaven.

This is an evident consequence of what reason and

faith tell us about the origin and purpose of man and again about the origin and purpose of the rest of creation. These plain facts give the right measure of all earthly greatness, of all worldly importance. As soon as one has grasped these fundamental truths, he will recognize that no wealth or health, no exterior gift or interior endowment, possesses for him any value, except it furthers in some way the Service he owes to his Creator; and he will grant that no study however sublime, no project however vast, no enterprise however promising, no achievement however momentous, should ever occupy him even for an instant, unless it positively accords with the Divine Will and actually tends to the Divine Glory.

We may be assisted in our appreciation of this first conclusion by putting it in a slightly different but very practical form: "I must use creatures neither more nor less than God commands, counsels, or desires me to use them." For clearly the only service we can render to God consists in the accomplishment of His Adorable Will. Hence, whether things please me or displease me, this should never influence my action and not even enter into my consideration. My likes and dislikes, as far as they have no bearing on my salvation, should leave me completely unconcerned. I should diligently seek and eagerly embrace whatever is in accordance with my Rules, with the orders and directions of my Superiors, with the advice of my Confessor, with the dispositions of Divine Providence, with the promptings of the Holy Spirit. I should unhesitatingly give up and carefully shun whatever is contrary, or merely foreign to the Adorable Will of God. But when uncertain, I should pray for light; and in more important matters I should, besides, take counsel with some prudent and fervent

person; so that, under all circumstances, the one dominant motive of my conduct may be the Divine Will.

This is to act and to live like a rational being; this is what forms or strengthens in the soul that most wise, most noble, and most practical habit which is technically called "Indifference." To be Indifferent, therefore, means to be unbiased, impartial, disinterested, unselfish; but it has nothing in common with listlessness or apathy, with the lazy mood of "I do not care," or "It is all the same to me." Indifference denotes the absence in the will of any inclination towards or any aversion for any creature, for its own sake or on our own account. Hence Indifference does not exclude any inclination however strong towards things prescribed by God nor any aversion however intense for things forbidden by God. It is concerned with all creatures outside our own personality, but only as long as we do not know how they are practically related to our spiritual interests, or how they can actually help us in the working out of our End; the praise, reverence, and service of our Heavenly Father.

If we use any created thing not in accordance with this first conclusion, we cease to be Indifferent, and our action is surely unreasonable, selfish, inordinate, perhaps even sinful. How wrong this is we can perhaps appreciate better by means of an illustration. If a chalice, consecrated by certain ceremonies to the Divine service, should be used for any but a sacred purpose, it is profaned; and if that use should be distinctly improper, we would call it a Sacrilege. In a similar manner, creatures are profaned when we use them for any other end than the service of God, since they have been created essentially for this one pur-

pose; and as man is a being immeasurably inferior to the Most High, by abusing creatures for our private gratification we commit something akin to Sacrilege. At the same time, every such abuse is clearly an act of the basest Ingratitude towards our Sovereign Benefactor.

These considerations may well fill us with shame and sorrow for our past inordinations and sins. Evidently, we must be Indifferent, if we intend to praise, revere, and serve God our Creator, and thus to save our immortal souls. The object of the General Examen is to discover to what extent our thoughts, words, and actions have been lacking in Indifference. Have we made it diligently at the appointed times twice a day?

To act constantly according to this evident conclusion, this fundamental rule of right reason, to practise Indifference at all times and under all circumstances, on the one hand constitutes the solid foundation of the loftiest sanctity, while on the other hand it demands the thorough reformation of our corrupt nature. For the thoughts of the human heart are prone to evil from an early age. We are reminded of this scriptural dictum by our daily experience. Owing primarily to the fall of Adam and secondarily to our own sins and faults, we are not Indifferent, we are not impartial, but on the contrary are inclined to use creatures for the sake of the satisfaction they afford to our senses and passions. Hence that quasi-instinctive horror we have of poverty and suffering.

In consequence of original sin we are infected with a threefold concupiscence; sensuality, covetousness, and pride; a threefold attachment to health, wealth, and honor. These cravings and repugnances of our

lower appetites—our likes and dislikes—are bad, not in themselves, but in their having broken away from the firm control of reason and of faith. They are bad on account of the disorder with which they make us go after some creatures and flee from others, without the slightest regard, or even in direct opposition to the Service of God, the accomplishment of His Holy Will, the observance of Rules, the Obedience due to Superiors, the claims of Fraternal Charity. Hence, whenever we are swayed by natural impulses we are in imminent danger of inverting the essential order of things, by appropriating to our own service the creatures made by God exclusively and necessarily for His.

But, whilst all men are subject to the three concupiscences, yet everybody has some predominant inclination, some particular form of self-love or self-esteem, which is at the root of most of his failings and shortcomings, and practically results in a decided lack of Indifference towards certain creatures. Against such a predominant passion we have to be constantly on our guard, and hence it should be thoroughly known. Here it may be well to examine ourselves once more on those common habits of thoughtlessness and precipitation, of fiction and emotionalism, of self-indulgence and self-complacency. What could be more obvious than that we should never judge nor fancy, except in strict accordance with the truth, never pretend to possess certainty when we have only probability, never confound our subjective impressions with the objective realities? Yet how often we forget these elementary principles, how often we go deliberately counter to them! The fact of the matter is, we need an unlimited amount of Self-Discipline.

Second Point. Second Conclusion: "Therefore, we have to Make ourselves Indifferent to all creatures."

This obligation of making myself Indifferent follows directly from the two evident truths considered just now, that I ought to be Indifferent and that I am not Indifferent. However, St. Ignatius wisely subjoins a restriction, "as far as it is left to our free will to do so." The reason of this is that my Indifference should be wholly regulated by my duty of serving God. Now, as to many things I can no longer be Indifferent, because in their regard I know already the Divine Will. On the contrary, I must be determined to use these creatures for promoting the glory of my Creator and the sanctification of my soul. No man, for instance, can be Indifferent as to the matter of the Ten Commandments, no Catholic can be Indifferent as to what falls under the Precepts of the Church. As a Religious I must be eager for whatever is prescribed by my holy Institute, or demanded by my sublime Vocation, or imposed by my lawful Superiors.

But as to all the rest, that is, as to whatever depends on the disposal of Divine Providence or the prescriptions of Holy Obedience, I have got to Make myself Indifferent. Because otherwise, owing to my sinful nature, owing to my unruly passions, owing to my strong leaning towards perishable goods and vain distinctions, I shall not be Indifferent; and if I am not Indifferent, I cannot make a right use of creatures; consequently, I shall fall into inordination and sin, I shall soon become a useless and wicked servant, and in the end I shall not be saved. Besides, since my fallen nature however much remedied can never be completely cured, since my wayward likes and

dislikes however much corrected can never be definitively mastered, since my passions will not cease to molest me till my body is destroyed in death, this Making myself Indifferent will always be necessary.

A very difficult task indeed, for it means the uprooting of inclinations and aversions that have been growing up in my heart for many, many years. Imagine a tree that has its tough roots firmly fixed in the stony soil. Consider the labor required first to cut it down, and next to loosen the earth around, in order finally to pull out the stump. My inordinate likes and dislikes are so many trees and stumps that have their roots in my own sensitive heart. To Make myself Indifferent means, then, a continual struggle against a most powerful and ever-active enemy, namely, my corrupt nature; it means a painful struggle in which I myself shall feel every wound inflicted on my opponent; it means an inward struggle and as such entirely removed from the notice and praise of my fellow men. In plain language, it means unsparing mortification and unlimited humiliation. But, however difficult this lifelong task may be, it is necessary and hence feasible; for on those who are willing God is sure to bestow abundant grace which can render easy even what otherwise would be impossible. Let us, then, take up this task with a boundless trust in the divine assistance.

How am I to Make myself Indifferent? There are three means to be used conjointly: I must resolve, I must pray, and I must practise. Resolution: since it is necessary, I have got to make up my mind to do it; and that without delay, for every moment my vicious propensities are growing stronger; without intermission, for to pluck them up by the root is not the work of one day; without restriction, for what would

it profit to resist one tendency while fostering another? Consequently, I must resolve to do it methodically, as I was taught in my noviceship, by means of the Particular Examen. Prayer: I must frequently beg for the virtue of holy Indifference; more than this, I must daily beseech God, if conducive to His better service, to send me those very things from which I unreasonably recoil and to deprive me of those others to which I am unduly attached; above all, I must incessantly implore grace to welcome the advent of what is disagreeable or humiliating as well as the withdrawal of what is pleasant or flattering. Practice: I must daily strive to carry out my resolution and to live up to my prayer, by resisting my natural inclinations, by curbing my natural aversions, by checking my inordinate likes and dislikes, so as to think, speak, or act, not from mere whim or impulse, but only from the motive and the desire of pleasing and serving God, my Creator and Lord.

In fact, the whole Retreat is intended to instruct us, and to persuade us, and to train us, in this matter of Indifference. These Spiritual Exercises will show us practically how to Conquer Ourselves, that is, how to vanquish our base selfishness and our detestable pride, how to acquire that habitual Indifference and holy Impartiality, which is not indolent apathy, nor gloomy stoicism, but buoyant energy, manly exertion, true nobility, and intimate union with God.

Third Point. Third Conclusion: We should Desire and Choose, under all circumstances, what is most Conducive to the End for which we have been created.

Whilst the practice of Indifference is continually necessary, yet this constitutes only one half of our

task on earth. It is only the negative part of the work of our sanctification. The positive part consists in constantly bending all our energy of soul and body to the accomplishment of the Will of God, as soon as He deigns to manifest it to us in any particular set of circumstances. This is Devotedness. And supposing that several things simultaneously occurred to us as conducive to the attainment of our End, this Devotedness should be so thorough as to make us unhesitatingly Prefer from among these things the one which appears to be the most useful. To adopt, in every conjuncture not simply what satisfies more or less the purpose of our creation, but what furthers most effectually the object of our Creator, in other words, to select persistently the Best Means for advancing our sanctification and for securing our salvation, this is the perfect rule of conduct deduced by St. Ignatius from the Principle and Foundation. Only this deserves to be called a well-regulated life: always seeking and using those creatures which are most suitable to increase the Glory of the Most High. Only this means to live for God alone, to make Him our All.

“Desire” expresses an enlightened and fervent disposition, a supernatural eagerness to know and to do the Holy Will of God, not diverted by fickle humor, not thwarted by wild fancy, not vanquished by blind passion. “Choose” denotes an actual and perfect correspondence to this efficacious desire, a joyful embracing of whatever is most advantageous to the Salvation of souls or to the service of God, and a generous discarding of whatever is less helpful.

This positive determination to use on all occasions the Best Means of which we can actually dispose for the attainment of our End, this thorough Devoted-

ness to the promotion of the Divine Glory, is just as important and indispensable as genuine Indifference to the cravings of our innate selfishness. Neither disposition can be conceived to exist apart from the other, and the two combined, Indifference and Devotedness, import a perfect liberty of the spirit, untrammelled by any downward tendency of nature, an undivided energy of the will centered on God and embracing everything else in God.

But which are the Best Means for fulfilling our purpose on earth and for reaching our end in heaven? In general, those Means may be called the Best which are most certain, most expeditious, and most efficient; or, in equivalent terms, surest, quickest, and fittest. Such are the means selected by all sensible people in carrying out a plan or in striving after an object. Men that intend to become rich are continually studying how, with the least risk and in the shortest time, they can amass the greatest amount of money. Evidently, as children of light, we should be no less prudent, practical, and businesslike in laboring for the imperishable goods of the next world. Hence, the Saints constantly prayed that they might know and do whatever was most pleasing to the Divine Majesty. Following in their footsteps, our steady and strenuous endeavor should be to employ every moment of our existence "*Ad Majorem Dei Gloriam*," for the Greater Glory of God.

These were the considerations that drew us to the Religious State, these were the ideals that filled us with esteem and admiration for the Holy Habit. Therefore, if we have failed to find in our Sublime Vocation that profound peace and jubilant happiness which we could rightfully expect, let us convince ourselves that our disappointment in this regard must be

attributed purely and solely to our forgetfulness of the heavenly vision, to our taking back a portion of the sacrifice, to our relaxing in the pursuit of holiness. Self-Conquest, or the vanquishing, uprooting, annihilating of our inborn selfishness, vigorously and perseveringly carried on with the grace of God, in order that we may be wholly possessed by Him and may live exclusively for His Glory, this is to be our one great ambition, our one absorbing occupation. Let this, then, be our resolution for the future: the instant we perceive in our heart an Inordinate leaning or aversion, we will tear it up like a poisonous weed; the moment we realize in any particular thing the Adorable Will of God, we will embrace and accomplish it with the utmost diligence and alacrity.

Colloquies: with the Blessed Virgin, free from all inordination and exempt from all concupiscence; also with our Divine Lord, Whose food it was to do the Will of His Heavenly Father. I will acknowledge my great lack of Indifference and Devotedness, my poor use of the General and Particular Examens, my frequent neglect of humble and fervent Prayer. I will regret that I have been so unfaithful in the Service of my Lord and Creator, so slothful in the work of my sanctification and salvation, so cowardly in the mortification of my senses, so remiss in the subjugation of my passions, so deficient in the humiliation of my spirit. I will implore pardon for my numberless sins, inordinations, and negligences. Lastly, I will promise amendment and beg grace to take up my task with fresh vigor, to live only for the perfect accomplishment of the Divine Will.—Hail Mary. Our Father.

A. M. D. G.

“MY CHILD, GIVE ME YOUR HEART.”

SECOND DAY

PATRON: St. Aloysius Gonzaga.

MOTTO: “Create in me a clean heart, O God.”

SPIRIT: Humility on account of my Sinfulness.

READING: Imitation; Bk. I, C. 18, 21, 23, 25.

Bk. III, C. 4, 8, 14, 52.

Gospels; St. Matthew, C. 25.

St. John, C. 11.

Prepare for a more than usually fervent Confession extending over the time elapsed since your last Retreat, or over any other portion of your past life, in so far as this may be conducive to deeper sorrow for sin or greater peace of mind.

THE TRIPLE SIN

Introductory Remarks.—We are now entering on the First Week, or period, of the Spiritual Exercises, which is devoted to the consideration of sin and its consequences. The subject of our Particular Examen during the entire Retreat should be, how we have observed silence and recollection, how we have applied ourselves to the meditations, examens, and other prayers, and how we have kept the additions. These additions, as stated before, are specific recommendations given by St. Ignatius, his expert advice, as it were, for making a successful Retreat. In the First Week, he tells us to refrain from thinking on pleasant and joyful subjects, to darken our apartment by not admitting more light than necessary for our various occupations, and to perform some exterior penance or bodily mortification, in accordance with the prescription of our Rule, the permission of our Confessor, or the direction of our Superior.

We should all take up the Exercises of this First Week with an intense desire of realizing more intimately the heinousness of our sins, in order that we may detest them more thoroughly and humble ourselves more deeply. All should do so, whether at some time or other of our past lives we have made ourselves guilty of mortal sin, or whether, in spite of our many infidelities and venial sins, we have been preserved by a special favor of God from grievously violating His Holy Law. Unless we do penance we

shall all likewise perish. Unless we strive to humble ourselves with the utmost sincerity, unless we labor to grieve over our sins from the bottom of our heart, we are wasting this opportunity of heavenly grace, we are missing this Divine Call to complete conversion, and besides, what is far more serious, by neglecting this indispensable preparation for future trials and temptations, we may jeopardize not only our Religious Vocation but even our Eternal Bliss. We must bear in mind that the fruit of this Retreat will be exactly proportional, not to the intensity of sensible consolation we may experience, nor to the abundance of ascetical doctrine we may gather, but to the shame, sorrow, and hatred we conceive for our past inordinations and sins.

All spiritual improvement must necessarily begin with the acknowledgment and condemnation of our faults, that is, with confusion and contrition; and the more intense these penitential dispositions, the more thorough will be our amendment. How often, perhaps, we have said to ourselves: "Oh, if I could only conceive such a detestation of the sins of my past life as would cancel them completely in the sight of God, my Heavenly Father, and restore to my soul the vesture of innocence in the eyes of Jesus, my Adorable Spouse!" Now, this will be precisely the fruit of the Exercises of the First Week, if we apply ourselves to them with real energy. But in order to detest sin we must in the first place strive to form a correct idea of sin; and as God alone fully understands the true nature of sin, we cannot do better than reflect on three successive manifestations of His estimate of sin. Meanwhile every one should diligently prepare to go to Confession. In this Confession we should include an accurate and contrite Review of the last year, and

also unburden our heart of anything that may cause us doubt or anxiety. Besides, we should acquaint our Confessor with the desires we feel and the efforts we are making to advance in perfection.

Subject of this Meditation.—The sin of the Angels, the sin of our First Parents, and the sin of a Soul actually lost in Hell, viewed in the light of the Divine Judgment.

Composition of Place.—The present abode of sin and of the sinner. St. Ignatius tells me to see in imagination and to consider with attention, my soul as it were imprisoned in this corruptible body, and my whole being, body and soul, in exile on this miserable earth among the brute animals.

Petition.—An intimate realization of the infinite hatred which God bears to sin, and hence an intense shame and confusion at my own condition, seeing how many have been condemned to Hell for one mortal sin and how often I have exposed myself to everlasting damnation through my numerous sins.

This is the necessary prerequisite for deep and ardent contrition. We cannot be profoundly sorry for our sins unless we are thoroughly ashamed of them. Suppose a Religious through his own fault were sentenced to the penitentiary for life, or farmed out for hard labor, as convicts used to be till recently in some States, to be treated worse than a brute; what utter humiliation, what intolerable confusion this would imply for him! But how immeasurably more intense should be the confusion of one who realizes that he has deserved to be, perhaps already for many years, in Hell?

First Point. The Sin of the Angels.

We may represent to ourselves the Angels as placed at their creation in an ethereal paradise, the vestibule of eternal bliss. Their number probably surpassed by far that of all men. Being by nature pure Spirits, they were independent of matter for their maintenance, motion, cognition, and volition. Their knowledge was wonderfully sublime, keen, and comprehensive; the energy of their will was proportioned to the loftiness of their intelligence; and their power outstripped that of the whole physical world. Besides, from the first moment of their creation they had been endowed with sanctifying grace and adorned with various virtues, preeminently with charity. And what was their purpose, their destiny? The same as ours, to show reverence and obedience to their Lord and Creator. Hence they were unceasingly singing the praises of the Most High, rapt in loving adoration before the throne of His Majesty.

How did so many come to fall? They knew what gifts God had bestowed on them, their marvelous natural faculties and their glorious supernatural endowments. They were free to direct their intelligence either to these gifts or to the Giver; and both operations were to be done, for how can we worthily honor and thank God for His benefits unless we take care to know and value them? But in the contemplation of these gifts there lies a great danger. It should be done only to praise, adore, and love God; only in as far as it is agreeable to His Holy Will. Hence, when we are prompted by an actual grace to turn our attention from ourselves to God, we are to do so without delay.

Many of the Angels, we may suppose, neglected such a grace. In itself this neglect was only an in-

ordination, but the consequence was that they persisted in their self-contemplation beyond the proper bounds, and that their will became unduly taken up with their own beauty. Perhaps yet another and stronger grace was offered and likewise rejected. Then the final test was proposed, which, according to some theologians, consisted in the adoration of the God-Man, Jesus Christ, the Second Person of the Ever-Blessed Trinity, hypostatically united to a creature that was specifically far inferior to the Angels; or, what would come to the same, in the veneration of the Immaculate Virgin Mary, Mother of God, and Queen of the Universe.

The greater part of the Angelic Hosts, following the lead of St. Michael, joyfully complied with the eternal decree, and in reward for their fidelity were forthwith admitted to the beatific vision, to the bliss and glory of Heaven. But Lucifer, when called upon to obey, despised the sovereign behest, exclaiming, "I will not serve"; and in this rebellion he was at once joined by numerous other Spirits. They refused to glorify their Creator, because they had become enamored of themselves and inflated with pride.

This sin, then, was one of wilful disobedience, committed in the very presence of the Infinite Majesty, by creatures that had been lavishly enriched with heavenly favors and were wholly destined for the Divine Service. But that same instant also they heard the awful sentence: "Depart from Me, you cursed, into everlasting fire." No longer adopted Sons but degraded Rebels, they are stripped of sanctifying grace and supernatural virtue. Their beauty is changed into hideousness, their wisdom has become madness, their love is turned into hatred, and from lofty Angels they are transformed into abject Demons. Driven

from before the throne of God they are hurled into the abyss of Hell. How different from their former abode and from their destined home! A prison instead of a palace, a torture chamber instead of a delightful paradise, a place of utter infamy instead of a seat of ineffable glory! There they are confined by that pitiless fire and consumed with incessant remorse. They wished to have their own way, they wanted to be their own masters; and now they are thrown back forever on their own nothingness, malice, and pride.

We should note that this punishment was visited on the Angels, the first and most perfect creatures of an infinitely Loving God; that it was inflicted on account of one single mortal sin by Him Who is infinitely Just and Who can, therefore, never be influenced by anger or hatred; by Him Who is infinitely Merciful and Who, consequently, always punishes less than deserved. Yet the sentence of damnation smote them immediately and peremptorily, because they had with full deliberation and consent offended God, their Creator and Father, because they had risen up against His Adorable Majesty, because they had turned away from His Sovereign Goodness, because they had bidden defiance to His Absolute Holiness; and on the last day all angels and all men, both the saved and the lost, will acknowledge the justice of this sentence.

As often as I deliberately transgressed any Commandment of God in a grievous manner, I committed an act of rebellion similar to that of the Angels, I incurred the guilt of a crime so heinous in the sight of God and His Saints as to deserve no less a punishment than Hell. If, in the very hour of sinning, death had cut short my earthly existence, I should

most certainly have received the same sentence of eternal damnation, while heaven and earth would have exclaimed, "Just Thou art, O Lord, and righteous in Thy judgments!" And if the Angels were cast into Hell for one single sin, what have I not deserved for so many; especially after obtaining pardon, not only once, but over and over again, through the Blood of Jesus Christ, in the Sacrament of Penance? Where should I be most justly, at this very moment, except for the Inexhaustible Mercy of God? Instead of being allowed to live on this earth, a member of Holy Church, in a Religious Community, among souls consecrated to God, I have deserved, perhaps many times over, to be at the bottom of Hell, an object of scorn to the very Demons and the other Reprobates.

But what if I never committed a mortal sin? Did I not deliberately neglect prayer which is so necessary for overcoming temptation? Did I not habitually fall into several kinds of venial sin? Did I not thus expose myself to the imminent danger of mortal sin? It is owing, then, not to my own deserts, but to the Ineffable Goodness of God, that I did not go down to that depth of iniquity from which in one moment I might have fallen into the pit of Hell among the rebel Angels. Hence I too, indeed, have abundant cause for shame and confusion.

Second Point. The Sin of our First Parents.

Let us call to mind how God had made the body of Adam most beautiful and perfect, and how He had created the soul after His own image and likeness, giving it the full use of all its faculties and endowing it, besides, with supernatural wisdom and sanctifying grace. Dwelling in the garden of Eden

as lord of the whole earth, Adam had received for a lifelong friend and companion Eve, fashioned by the Almighty in every kind of perfection similar to her husband. We may contemplate the beauty and pleasantness of their early abode, the limpidity and coolness of its springs, the sweetness and variety of its fruits, the submission and gentleness of the animals, and the wondrous virtue of the tree of life which insured their freedom from suffering and death. Yet this material happiness was only a reflection of their inward peace of soul, resulting from their close union with God and the perfect harmony of all their faculties. Now, all these benefits were intended for one sole object, namely, that both Adam and Eve together with their entire offspring, by praising, revering, and serving God, might bring human nature to its highest perfection and complete in themselves the Divine likeness. Thus also this earthly Eden was but an entrance to the heavenly Jerusalem.

To test the obedience of our First Parents, God had forbidden them to eat of the fruit of the tree of knowledge. We see at once how just this prohibition was, how easy, and how weighty. By respecting this benign injunction, Adam would have secured, both for himself and for his posterity, the gift of sanctifying grace together with many other extraordinary favors. He was offered a choice between the fulness of life, natural as well as supernatural, and a miserable death of both body and soul; a choice between perfect felicity and utter affliction.

However, they did eat of the forbidden fruit and sinned. Lucifer, the leader of the fallen angels, appeared to them under the form of a serpent, which probably was then, not the insidious and repulsive reptile that most men now instinctively avoid, but an

attractive and even sociable animal. With perfidious cunning he began by tempting Eve, in order through her also to seduce Adam. First, he suggested to her fancy that the restriction put upon them by the Almighty was in no wise intended for their happiness; next, he instilled into her heart a desire of becoming completely independent of the Most High; and then he drove her from this inward disloyalty into open disobedience. Eve in turn, by her bad example and insinuating manner, prevailed upon Adam to set aside the Divine Prohibition.

Their eating of the forbidden fruit, though in itself a very small thing, was nevertheless a deliberate and wilful rejection of God's Supreme Authority. Nor was the threatened penalty long in being inflicted. That same moment our First Parents were deprived of all their heavenly graces and special endowments; they were driven out of the terrestrial paradise into the wide world which thenceforth was to yield only thistles and thorns; and, filled with shame at the lustfulness of their bodies, they were obliged to cover them with the skins of animals. They too had decided to have their own way and to be their own masters, but they found that their flesh had revolted against their spirit and that the whole earth had shaken off their former supremacy.

The remainder of their lives was spent in constant and manifold misery, which finally culminated in the terrible ordeal of death. Yet all these sufferings would have availed them naught to escape eternal perdition, had it not been for the infinite merits of their promised Redeemer. But even so, what lamentable consequences this one sin entailed for all their descendants: loss of sanctifying grace and other precious gifts; darkness of the mind and weakness

of the will; subjection of the soul to a threefold concupiscence; numberless hardships and ailments of the body rapidly preparing the way for death.

We should consider well that this penalty was imposed not on angelic spirits but on human beings, who in so many respects are dependent on the lowliness and limitation of matter, and who had been led into sin by the deceits of Satan, the implacable enemy of God; that it was imposed for one single sin of disobedience, which had lasted but an instant and had soon after been most sincerely detested; that it was imposed by Him Who is infinitely Holy as well as infinitely Loving, but Whose Justice was acknowledged from the first by the Angels and the Demons as well as by our guilty Parents, and will be recognized by the whole human race, on the day of judgment, for all eternity.

Consequently, even this fearful chastisement, visited on Adam and Eve and their entire posterity, does not fully correspond to the wickedness of even one mortal sin. But, in any case, if I had been placed in the same position as Adam, the poison contained in each of the offenses committed by me, would have been sufficient to infect all mankind. What punishment, then, can be commensurate with my numerous sins? What shame and confusion should I not be made to suffer before the whole world on account of so many iniquities? What place could I ever claim to occupy among my fellow men except the very last and lowest?

But if, through the Mercy of God, I have till now been preserved from mortal sin, I yet have every reason to be filled with shame and confusion on account of my numberless inordinations in the past, and more especially in view of my frequent indulgence of idle-

ness, curiosity, vanity, self-complacency, anger, impatience, gluttony, sensuality, untruthfulness, disobedience, and pride. How often, indeed, have I been prevented from committing mortal sin, only, as it were, by a miraculous intervention of Providence?

Third Point. The Sin of a Lost Soul.

There yet remains to be considered a still more striking instance of Divine Retribution; namely, the loss of "a soul who for one mortal sin has gone to Hell, and of many others without number that have been condemned for fewer sins than I committed." No one can entertain a reasonable doubt about what St. Ignatius here proposes to us as a certain truth; namely, that many a Soul is actually in Hell in consequence of one single mortal sin. Hence the instant doom pronounced on millions of Angels, for one act of rebellion, cannot be accounted for by the fact that they had been gifted with a more exalted nature than ours; nor can the severe treatment meted out to our First Parents, for their one sin of disobedience, be explained on the ground that they had been created in original justice.

But how did such a Soul get to that place of never-ending punishment? Let me consider one whose natural difficulties, supernatural endowments, and various other circumstances were pretty similar to those in which I grew up, who was exposed to temptations very like those to which I yielded, and who fell into exactly the same sin that I also committed. Then death overtook that Soul before it returned to God, and now it is forever tormented in the unquenchable flames of Hell. If I could ask that Soul, "Do you consider your punishment just?" there is no doubt as to what it would reply.

“Yes,” I should hear it say, “my punishment is eminently just, for I received precisely what I had before clearly understood would be the consequence of my sin. I knew that God had threatened the sinner with everlasting damnation. I knew that in creating me out of pure Goodness He had destined me for Heaven, and that He had even gone so far as to die for me on the Cross in order to bring me to eternal bliss and glory. I knew that in His wise and loving Providence He had disposed every detail of my life for the best. I could easily have abstained from that sin, but nevertheless I committed the crime with full deliberation and consent. The fact is I pretended to be my own master, I insisted on having my own way, and I justly went down to Hell.

“Besides, my punishment considered in itself is most appropriate. For surely the penalty ought to bear some proportion to the offense. Therefore, inasmuch as I turned away from the Sovereign Good, it should comprise the pain of loss; in so far as I abused God’s creature, it must include also the pain of sense; and since I insulted His infinite Majesty, it could not be other than eternal. Indeed, every one who dares to commit a mortal sin deserves a punishment infinite in degree as well as in duration.

“Moreover, this punishment being certainly merited was also rightfully inflicted on me shortly after my first mortal sin. For, evidently, the Almighty was not obliged to suspend in my behalf the operation of the natural causes that were about to effect my death at the very time when I was burdened with the guilt of grievous sin. He very seldom interferes with these created agencies even in behalf of those who are innocent and holy. On the contrary, the wickedness of mortal sin would rather seem to de-

mand that the physical laws be suspended the very instant a man attempts to violate the moral laws, so that he may forthwith be thrown into Hell as a warning to all. Any one who in his frenzy and villainy rebels against the Adorable Creator and outrages the Absolúte Holiness, should expect to be cut off at once, like a horrid monster, from human society, and to be cast headlong into this moral cesspool of the universe. Hence, what has happened to me has likewise happened to many others, who passed into eternity defiled with the guilt of one or more mortal sins, and are consequently ever since suffering these same inconceivable torments. And their number is still increasing every day." Such would be the answer of that Soul, if I could question it.

In the light of this fact that so many are lost for one single sin, how silly appears the presumption that it is easy to avoid Hell after committing a grievous offense, and what utter folly it was for me to remain so long on the brink of perdition or even within the reach of temptation. Where should I be now, if God had wished to deal with me as He most justly dealt with countless other sinners perhaps far less guilty than myself? Is there any humiliation however profound that I should not look upon as a signal distinction in comparison with what I have deserved? Is there any practice of penance that I should not be eager to adopt with the sanction of my Confessor? Should I not gladly prostrate myself on the ground, if commanded, and lower myself in the dust before every creature? Should I, henceforth, not deem it a real honor to be allowed to assist my fellow Religious or to serve my neighbor in any office however menial, for the sake of God? And shall I still presume to find fault with my Companions, their words,

ways, or actions? Shall I ever again forget myself so far as to criticize the management or command of my Superior? or to show lack of respect and submission towards this legitimate vicegerent of Almighty God?

By my sins,—by my degradation, ingratitude, and malice,—I have rendered myself unworthy and unfit not only to be a member of this Religious Community but even to have any intercourse with the rest of mankind. If God had treated me as was only right and just, I should long since have been an outcast of creation, a prisoner in Hell, abandoned to perpetual torment and infamy. And even now, the vices fostered by my sins in my soul, if they could be seen by my fellow men in all their ugliness, would fill them with a most profound loathing for my person and make them shun at any cost my presence and my very neighborhood. But what, then, ought to be my shame and confusion when appearing in prayer before Almighty God, when acknowledging my sins to the Minister of Christ, and especially when preparing to receive my Adorable Savior in Holy Communion?

Colloquy.—“Imagining before me Christ our Lord on the Cross,” says St. Ignatius, “I will ask Him how, being my Creator, He has deigned to make Himself Man, and from eternal life to come to temporal death, to expire in anguish for my Sins. Then turning to myself, I will inquire what I have done for Christ, what I am doing for Christ, and what I ought to do for Christ. Again looking up to Him, the Eternal Son of God, fastened to the Cross, I will give expression to what shall present itself to my mind.”

Kneeling down in spirit on Calvary, my face buried

in my hands for shame, near those pierced feet which I dare not touch with my sinful lips, but allowing my tears to mingle with that sacred blood, I will consider that He Who is nailed to this cruel Cross, is the Incarnate Word, coequal with the Eternal Father, the Almighty Creator of angels and of men, and that now He is racked with bodily pain, consumed with thirst, overwhelmed with insults, and dying in unutterable torments and ignominy, not only on account of the sin of Adam and the sins of other men, but in particular on account of my personal sins. Yes, my sins made Him come down from heaven to earth; my sins fastened Him to this infamous Cross; my sins inflicted this excessive punishment on Jesus, my Adorable Savior. Such is the hatred of God for sin; such is the love of God for sinners.

It is owing exclusively to this same Divine Immolation that in spite of my numberless and hideous sins, I was called to repentance, and that I was even favored with a Religious Vocation; whilst so many others, millions of men and angels, who committed, perhaps, far fewer sins than I, are already buried in the flames of Hell. What merciful preference, what singular predilection of Christ, the Sovereign Lord, for me, most wretched and ungrateful sinner! He loved all His creatures and He died for all mankind, but me He loved and for me He died with special efficacy. O wonder of Divine Goodness, beyond all human power to express!

And in return for so much love, what have I done for Christ in the past? Surely, this is not the first time I hear of the Son of God dying for me on the Cross. No; I learned this already in early childhood. But what return did I make to Him? Alas! I offended Him by innumerable sins. O detestable

wickedness! O horrible ingratitude! And what am I doing for Christ now? I am meditating on my sins. Am I now at least filled with shame and confusion on account of these heinous crimes? How is it possible that I can still remain so selfish and so proud! But what ought I to do for Christ in the future? I must completely cleanse my soul from all stain of sin; I must carefully shun every occasion and temptation; I must assiduously use the means of grace, Confession, Penance, Prayer, and Holy Communion; I must strive to do the Will of God perfectly, in the observance of my Rules, in the practice of Obedience, in the fulfilment of my Duties, in the exercise of Charity, in the patient and joyful bearing of whatever Hardships and Humiliations He may deign to send me in expiation of my sins. In this way, I must remove whatever obstacles I have placed so long to the love of His Sacred Heart. For though He has no need of us, no need of our labor, our teaching, or our ministry, yet He longs for our love. And love Him I will, at any cost. Sweet Heart of Jesus, be my love!—Our Father.

MY PERSONAL SINS

Introductory Remarks.—If I have meditated with fruit on The Triple Sin, I shall be fully convinced that, in view of my past sins, I do not deserve to be numbered among the Chosen Companions of Jesus our Lord, and that, if God had not prevented me by most liberal favors from falling into worse offenses, I should have merited to be actually in the company of hideous Demons and their wretched Victims. This realization will fill me with a most salutary and holy confusion, since there is nothing so vile, so loathsome, so abominable, as the society of the Devils and the Damned. Even to be forced here on earth to associate with a gang of convicted criminals or hopeless profligates, would be nothing compared to being cast for all eternity into that vast sink of moral impurity and infamy, which is called Hell.

Once we have succeeded in thus realizing where we should deserve to be but for the Incomprehensible Love of God, oh! how we feel urged to lower our eyes and cover our face for very shame, to cast ourselves on the earth in profound self-abasement, to humble ourselves before those who represent to us God's Infinite Majesty, our Superiors and our fellow Religious, before all men in fact, and to render them the most menial and most laborious services with the disposition and the bearing of a devoted slave. This, indeed, is the only correct attitude of mind for every one of us, from which we should never depart under any circumstances.

But, besides this deep conviction that I do not deserve to live among the Cherished Companions of our Lord, I should have gathered from the preceding meditation also a firm resolve to destroy the hindrances which I have placed so long to the Love of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, and to render myself capable of receiving those treasures of Grace which He has yearned to bestow upon me all along during so many years. This is certainly what He looks for on my part: unremitting exertion in ridding my soul not only of every stain of actual sin but also of every remnant of past sin.

Meanwhile we should long for the hour when we can lay open our inmost soul to the Minister of Christ, in the Sacrament of Penance, being determined to use this opportunity in order to humble ourselves as sincerely and as deeply as possible. As to our annual Review, we should bear in mind that the object is not so much to have the guilt of our sins forgiven—for this, we may trust, was done long ago—but to obtain if possible the full remission of the penalty and the complete removal of the effects of these sins. Oh! might we bring to this Confession a contrition like that of St. Aloysius, fainting through shame and grief on account of some semi-deliberate venial sins, or like that of St. Ignatius, practising for many months such terrible penance in the lonely cave near Manresa.

Whatever advice or command any one may have received, on former occasions, about never mentioning again certain faults of the past; during this Retreat and, particularly, for this Confession, every one should consider himself entirely free either to leave these matters untouched or to go over any part and any sins of his whole life. The latter course,

however, is not to be adopted from idle scrupulosity or groundless fear, but solely from the desire of obtaining deeper humility and greater sorrow. But if any one should be laboring under doubts or difficulties, let him not fail to propose them in this Confession with childlike openness and docility, in order that he may secure perfect peace of mind.

Subject of this Meditation.—My personal sins.

Composition of Place.—The same as in The Triple Sin; namely, my soul imprisoned in this corruptible body and my whole being, body and soul, on this miserable earth, as it were, in exile among the brute beasts. That this is not an exaggerated figure but a sober truth, must be evident to any one who considers how man, though by virtue of creation the legitimate king of the visible universe, is now in consequence of sin compelled to conceal the nobility and beauty of his form under dead vegetable fibers and animal skins.

Petition.—Heartfelt sorrow, intense contrition, and penitent tears, for all my sins.

First Point. The Process or Indictment of My Sins.

This Indictment is to be drawn up by calling to mind all the Sins of my past life. Several things will help me in this work; the places where I have stayed and the houses in which I have dwelled, the persons with whom I have lived and the companions with whom I have associated, the occupations in which I have been engaged and the amusements in which I have spent my time. But since I am a Reli-

gious striving after Perfection, this Indictment or Process against myself may include, besides my many more or less grievous Offenses, also my countless Inordinations.

As to the Sins and Faults that have marred our Life in the World, we should exert ourselves—either by a diligent survey, if we have made this meditation already several times before, or else by a careful examination, if we have never yet entered thoroughly into ourselves,—to recall their various kinds and approximate numbers. Without letting our imagination dwell on any circumstances that might prove a source of disturbance and temptation, we should transfer ourselves back to the moment when each sin was committed and its guilt was realized, when we found ourselves inwardly defiled under the very eyes of the All-Holy God, our most Loving Creator and Father. It will also be very useful on this occasion to arrange those sins under a few heads, so that we may always keep their recollection vividly before our minds.

But as to Sins and Faults of our Religious Life, we should search them out with great earnestness, especially those committed since our last Retreat. For we are extremely prone to hide from ourselves our real defects, and to trouble ourselves less about the inward guilt than about the outward manifestation of our faults. We must, therefore, endeavor to go to the root of the evil, to discover the cause or motive of our failings; for instance, why we break silence, why usually at such a time, why frequently with such a person, and so forth.

Again, we should strive to examine our conscience and to estimate our sins in the light of the Divine Holiness and Justice, to judge of our guilt as we

shall be judged when standing before the tribunal of our Lord Jesus Christ, and utterly to discard all the vain excuses and paltry extenuations with which we are accustomed to conceal from ourselves our own iniquities or even presume to make them a matter of self-commiseration and self-complacency. We must tear away the veil under which we hide our vileness, in order to see ourselves in our real condition, as we appear in the sight of God, the infinitely Pure Spirit, and as we are known by our Guardian Angels and Patron Saints. How could we afterwards, as we intend to do, lay bare in confession our inmost soul, if we remain satisfied, as is so often the case, with an indolent, superficial, self-blinded, self-approving review of the past?

Hence, to draw up this Indictment against ourselves truthfully and sincerely, we need a very special Grace; and for this we should pray most earnestly. Even after having made this meditation dozens of times in successive annual Retreats, there is still ample room for forming a more correct estimate of our sinfulness and for conceiving a correspondingly more profound Shame and more heartfelt Sorrow.

If on this occasion, in answer to our earnest prayer, God should favor us with more abundant light we shall discover that our lives are literally replete with sin. How many sins of thought; how many sins of speech; how many sins of action; how many sins of omission! In very truth, has there been one month, or one week, or even one day, during which we did not frequently offend our Sovereign Lord? Can we point to a single faculty of our soul or a single sense of our body that we have not abused over and over again? What a mass of wickedness we have thus

accumulated! And even after we entered the Religious State, how many prayers said with distraction, how many moments wasted in sloth, how many words spoken in anger; how many transgressions of rule, how many breaches of charity, how many violations of holy poverty, how many faults against angelic purity, how many shortcomings in perfect obedience; how much carelessness in duty, how much insincerity in conduct, how much despondency in affliction, how much selfishness in enjoyment, how much vanity in success! We have every reason, therefore, to exclaim with the Royal Psalmist: "My iniquities are gone over my head, and as an immense burden they press heavily upon me."

Second Point. "To Weigh My Sins, considering the foulness and malice that every mortal sin contains in itself, even supposing it were not forbidden."—In fact, sin is not bad because it is forbidden, but sin is forbidden because it is bad, because it clashes with the harmony of creation, because it is destructive of all order, well-being, progress, and happiness. But without indulging in any philosophical speculations, let us strive to realize first the Folly or Frenzy of sin, secondly the Malice or Fiendishness of sin, and thirdly the Foulness or Villainy of sin.

The Folly or Frenzy of Sin and, consequently, also of the Sinner.—Here we may note; first, the Blindness of Sin, because God forbids only what is contrary to our real welfare and our true happiness, while He enjoins nothing except for our greater good; then, the Madness of Sin, inasmuch as by sinning man cuts himself loose, forever, from God, the Source of all blessing, on Whom he is actually dependent for his very existence; and lastly, the Insolence of Sin, con-

sidering a mere, puny creature disobeys God's immaculate Law, violates God's inalienable Right, offends God's infinite Majesty, and commits these outrages in God's immediate Presence, that Presence which fills with awe the loftiest Seraphim. Before passing on, let us strive to conceive an inward confusion so thorough and an outward shame so great as to repair in some measure our former Insolence; and, if these sentiments are prompted by grace, our hearts will soon be filled with genuine sorrow and our eyes with loving tears.

The Malice or Fiendishness of Sin and, consequently, of the Sinner.—Here we may observe first, the Cruelty of Sin, how it upsets our organic functions, poisons our blood, impairs our nervous system, soils our memory, obscures our intellect, enfeebles our will; in a word, how it undermines our bodily, mental, and moral Energy; and, what is infinitely worse how it destroys our heavenly Merits, kills our supernatural Life, and thus brings on us eternal Punishment. Secondly, we may examine the Malignity of Sin, how it infects our neighbor like a most contagious and virulent plague, not only by positive seduction or complicity, but also by the inevitable scandal of bad example and the downward influence of evil dispositions; in short, how Sin tends to communicate to our fellow men the same Harm as it causes to ourselves. Thirdly, we should dwell on the Atrocity of Sin, how it has inflicted on our Loving Savior all the sorrows and sufferings of His earthly life, but particularly all the torments, ignominy, and dereliction of His Passion and Death. Pausing at this last reflection, we should labor to intensify still more our confusion and our shame, and then remembering that, except for the Ineffable Mercy of God, we should have already incurred ever-

lasting separation from Him, our Sovereign Good, our heart ought surely to be crushed with contrition manifesting itself in more copious tears.

The Foulness or Villainy of Sin and, consequently, of the Sinner.—Here we may consider; first, the utter Degradation of the Sinner, for by sinning man lowers himself to the very level of the Beast, preferring to be ruled by his sensual passions and to be enslaved by his animal instincts, instead of being guided by Reason and Faith; then, the horrible Treason of the Sinner, presuming, as he does, to refuse the service that is absolutely due to his Almighty Creator and attempting to cast off the dominion of his Eternal King, intending, in fact, as far as lies in him to annihilate his Sovereign Lord; lastly, the monstrous Ingratitude of the Sinner, inasmuch as he wilfully abuses God's Gratuitous Gifts and deliberately turns against Him the very proofs of His Admirable Love, thus rendering to Him Who is infinitely Great, infinitely Holy, and infinitely Good, contempt instead of worship, insult instead of praise, and hatred instead of affection, as a most unnatural child despising, offending, and dishonoring his Divine Benefactor, his own Heavenly Father. This third consideration, indeed, ought to lower us into a veritable abyss of confusion and to pierce our soul with such grief as will cause our tears to flow without restraint or measure.

Now, what practical conclusion am I to draw from this very imperfect analysis of the Foulness and Malice of Sin? Though even the smallest sin is so great an evil as to defy all human power of expression, yet evidently the answer to this question must depend somewhat on whether my transgressions of the Ten Commandments have been mortal or venial. In the first case, I ought to realize with overwhelming shame

and sorrow, that considering the heinousness of my sins I have no right to expect anything but to be designated and treated by everybody as a downright maniac, a dangerous fiend, and a despicable villain. In the other case, knowing that, except for the special protection of Heaven, I certainly should have forfeited Sanctifying Grace in consequence of my innumerable faults, and that even though none of them constituted in itself a grievous offense, yet they were all deliberate and wilful violations of the Divine Law, I ought to realize with deep humility and contrition, that I deserve to be looked upon and dealt with by my fellow men as one guilty of countless acts of indescribable folly, cruelty, and baseness. But in either case, the fruit of this Second Point should consist in an intense hatred, a real abhorrence, of my wicked Self, accompanied by a vehement yet tender sorrow for every one of my Sins.

Third Point. Who am I that Committed so many Acts of inconceivable Frenzy, Fiendishness, and Villainy?

What am I in comparison with the other members of this Community, with the other subjects of my Order or Congregation? How easy it is to fill the place of any Religious, even though he be an efficient teacher, or an eloquent speaker, or an able administrator; and how soon is the loss forgotten. Not seldom, in fact, far from being a regrettable loss, his death is felt to be a distinct relief. Some Religious, either through their own fault or through bodily infirmity, become a real burden, though borne with patience and charity. But what am I in comparison with all those actually living on this earth in the state of Sanctifying Grace? What, in comparison

with all the Saints and Angels in heaven, myriads of blissful and glorious spirits, together with their most exalted Queen, the Immaculate Virgin Mary? What, then, can I be in comparison with Almighty God, Whom I have dared to insult so often by my sins? Less than a grain of sand on the seashore, less than a tiny drop in the ocean, less than a mere atom in the universe; nothing.

Again, what am I as to my material component, my body? How great and manifold is even its present misery, the consequence of original and actual sin! In how many ways it is exposed to injury, to how many diseases it may fall a victim! And what will it be a few hours after my death but a disgusting mass of corruption? Yet the misery of my body is only a faint image of the wretchedness of my spiritual component, my soul. To what else can I liken my soul, from which have issued so many sins, so many iniquities, but to a hideous sore or a loathsome abscess? In fact, what thoughts usually occupy my understanding even within these sacred walls of Religion?—vanity, self-complacency, ambition. What sentiments are harbored by my will?—impatience, envy, resentment. What recollections haunt my memory? what images fill my fancy? what cravings engross my heart?—sensuality, indulgence, frivolity, worldliness.

Indeed, how colossal must be my conceit and how intense my egoism that, though continually reminded on every side of my utter weakness, worthlessness, and wickedness, I should still be so ready to criticize my Companions and even my Superiors, so prone to condemn the actions and intentions of my neighbor, so attached to my own opinions, so inflated with everything I do, so eager to be esteemed on ac-

count of what is not mine, and so averse to being despised and punished as I deserve in view of my numberless misdeeds? Owing particularly to my inveterate pride, how disedifying my ways have often been even after my separation from the World, how superficial my sentiments of contrition, how half-hearted my acts of self-humiliation, how rare and lenient my practices of penance! Yet I offended my Heavenly Father so shamefully and so repeatedly that not even the tears and fastings and scourgings of all holy penitents would be sufficient to atone for my iniquity, my ingratitude, and my insolence. With what earnestness, then, I ought to pray and strive during this Retreat for the grace of a more complete conversion!

Fourth Point. Who is God against Whom I have Sinned?

Just as my own nothingness, so God's Essential Greatness is altogether beyond my power of conception. How immeasurably high, for instance, His Sovereign Wisdom soars above my extreme ignorance! God knows all things without any obscurity or confusion; and each thing individually, down to its minutest details and most intimate composition, with the same perfection and clearness as all. Truly, everything is naked and open to His eyes; yes, even the deepest recesses of the human heart. He knows me at this moment with absolute completeness and certainty; even my future is seen by Him just as distinctly as my present and my past. What is more, He knows with equal precision how I would act under any possible circumstances which will never become real. Besides, He knows thus not only every single being that He ever created, but also the innu-

merable other beings which He might, but never will create. And all this Immense Knowledge He exercises unceasingly by one absolutely Single Act which is identical with His own Divine Substance. Contrasted with this Infinite Intelligence, what is all the boasted science of mankind but dense stupidity? Yet how infinitesimal is my personal share in the hazy, crude, and superficial notions men have so laboriously acquired in the course of so many centuries! and how trifling an accident may at any instant throw this mental equipment of mine into hopeless disorder!

Again, what incalculable distance there is between His Unlimited Power and my utter weakness! What stand, for instance, could I make against the crash of a thunderbolt, or against the rush of a cyclone, or against the descent of an avalanche? What resistance could I offer to the shock of an earthquake, or to the motion of the tide, or to the impact of a planet? But how inconceivably helpless, then, I would be in face of all the forces of the universe combined! Yet God moves them with His finger, yea, by a mere Act of His Will. "He spoke and they were made, He commanded and they were created." Moreover, everything that exists is sustained and energized by that same Creative Act. The multiform and ceaseless activity of the whole world is nothing but an effect of that one Divine Fiat. Unless the Almighty, besides creating and preserving my being with all my senses and faculties, deigns to come each moment to my assistance, I cannot conceive a thought, or foster a desire, or utter a sound, or make the least movement, or exercise any vital function.

Once more, what point of contact can there be between His Supreme Goodness and my abject in-

iquity? I, so injurious to myself, so offensive to my fellow men, and so unjust towards God; He, infinitely Perfect in Himself, most Liberal towards all His creatures, and towards me in particular so Loving and so Merciful. This last consideration, especially, should cover me with shame, fill me with burning grief, and make me shed a flood of tears. Has He not loved me gratuitously from all eternity, and called me forth out of nothing that I might be enabled to enjoy His own infinite happiness in heaven? Has He not deigned to become Man for my sake, and to die on a cross for my salvation? Is it not through excess of love that He is actually sharing my exile in the Holy Eucharist? Is He not constantly supplying all my needs with the most minute and tender care; He, the Sovereign Lord of Hosts, the All-Powerful, All-Wise, All-Good, Incomprehensible, Eternal Being?

But I should also call to mind how many extraordinary proofs I have received all along of God's ineffable Love and admirable Solitude, not only before I began to lead a life of sin but even during my most heinous excesses. At my first Holy Communion, what sweet attractions, what powerful impulses I felt in His adorable Presence! Already then He desired to possess my soul as His spouse. Yet what subsequent forgetfulness, unfaithfulness, ingratitude, and rebellion; what abuse of all His gifts and favors; what wanton destruction, perhaps, of every trace of His divine Likeness! Who could even with tears of blood wash away so many hateful offenses committed by so vile a wretch against a God so Gracious and so Good? And if, abstracting from my life in the World, I consider only the faults committed by me since my entrance into Religion, or merely the sins I am about to confess in my annual

Review, ought I not to acknowledge from my inmost heart that I am totally unworthy to be a member of this Holy Institute, and that in view of my violations of Rule, my neglect of Duty, my lack of Charity, I have amply merited to be severed from it as a useless and offensive limb?

What wonder, then, if the Almighty, wearied of my habitual tepidity and numberless infidelities, had long since vomited me out of His mouth? What wonder, if the Most High had cut me off in the midst of my wickedness and abandoned me to the frightful consequences of my frenzy? Ought I not rather to be lost in astonishment how His faithful creatures could suffer me to live at all and even assist me in prolonging my sinful existence; how the sun and the earth, fire and water, plants and animals, and thousands of my fellow men, could keep ministering to my wants and to my very pleasures; how the Holy Angels that ever stand ready to avenge any insult offered to the Divine Majesty could take special charge of me and guard me from every fatal accident; how the glorious Saints and the Immaculate Virgin herself could continue to pray and intercede for me, at the very time, perhaps, when by my crimes I deserved that the ground should open under my feet and cause me to drop, body and soul, into the abyss of Hell? However, what is yet infinitely more astounding is that Almighty God Himself, after I had forfeited every claim to His further forbearance, after I had repaid His singular mercies with ever grosser insults, vouchsafed to come down from the blissful throne of His Majesty, and to assume for my sake the fallen nature of man, and on my account to die in the most excruciating torments and the most harrowing ignominy on the gibbet of the Cross.

Colloquy, as in the preceding meditation, at the feet of Christ my Lord, Who for love of me and on my behalf is dying in the most atrocious sufferings and the most profound disgrace, nailed naked to this horrible Cross.

' I will beg again and again, with all the energy of my soul for intense and perfect contrition; a contrition that may cause me also to faint for shame and grief; a contrition like that of St. Peter, St. Mary Magdalen, St. Margaret of Cortona, St. Catherine of Genoa, St. Francis Borgia, or St. Margaret Mary. I will also render most sincere and heartfelt thanks to God, my Savior, for preserving my earthly existence till now, notwithstanding my continual unfaithfulness to the promptings of His Holy Spirit, and for making me realize at length the frenzy, the fiendishness, and the villainy of my numberless iniquities: and I will renew my determination with the help of His Grace, to labor at my thorough amendment for the future; to begin a new life free not only from sin but also from inordination; and, as far as possible, to do daily penance for the past. Yes, from now on I will do all the penance I can, in accordance with the Holy Will of God, in keeping with my Religious Duties, in compliance with the inspirations of Grace, and in conformity with the advice of my Confessor. And that I may be able to carry out this resolution, still prostrate before my Divine Lord, expiring in anguish to redeem my guilty soul, I will entreat and implore Him to give me such a vehement thirst of atoning for my sins as no hardship and no contempt can ever allay.—Our Father.

EMENDATION OF LIFE

We are all more or less suffering from tepidity and routinism: we know it, we regret it, but we seldom go to the root of this evil, which is our lack of self-knowledge, our neglect of self-examination. Our minds may be daily crossed by multitudes of frivolous, self-complacent, uncharitable thoughts, of which we take no more notice than persons addicted to profanity do of the number and character of their curse-words; while our hearts may be so completely taken up with the attractions of sensible objects, that we are continually led astray by the inordinate tendencies of our Nature and almost blindly follow the suggestions of the Devil, often without realizing our danger till it is too late. In fact, these habitual dispositions of mind and heart may be so closely interwoven with our daily lives as to escape for some time the attention even of the vigilant and fervent, thus paralyzing their efforts towards Perfection. Without the Grace of God it would be well-nigh impossible to detect them. Still, while putting our trust in the Divine Mercy, we ought also to do our own share by making a searching Examination of Conscience.

The faults set forth in this Conference, are intended only to give an idea how diligently one ought to review his past conduct at this stage of the Retreat. It does not pretend to furnish anything like an exhaustive list of the defects to which Religious are subject, and hence it may profitably be supplemented from other sources according to each one's personal needs. I

will, then, on this occasion seriously examine, not my Companions, much less my Superiors, but my own inmost heart, before God, my Heavenly Father, my Sovereign Lord, and my Unerring Judge, after first humbly imploring the Light and Grace of His Holy Spirit.

I will examine whether I have sinned against both **the Vow and the Virtue of Poverty** by disposing of things independently, that is, without the sanction of Superiors. Or, while keeping my Vow, do I perhaps offend against the Virtue of Poverty by being unduly attached to the goods of this world or to the articles given me for my use; by desiring greater conveniences or something above and beyond what is necessary; by retaining clothes, furniture, books, or other objects of which I have no longer any actual need; or by allowing what has not been put under my special care, to be spoiled, wasted, or lost? When friends or relatives make me a present, do I insist on leaving it with the Superior, that he may dispose of it as he may think best in the Lord? Do I sometimes elicit gifts from outsiders by throwing out hints about my needs or tastes? Have I broken my Vow of Poverty by retaining such presents for my own use without leave? or again, by giving to relatives, friends, or pupils, expensive rosaries, valuable pictures, and such like objects; acting, perhaps, under the spell of some spiritual illusion?

I will examine to what extent I have neglected the safeguards of both **the Vow and the Virtue of Chastity**; namely the custody of my senses, especially my eyes and my touch; the custody of my imagination from unbecoming representations or sinful recollec-

tions; the custody of my heart from particular friendship or carnal affection; and the custody of my mind from curiosity about matters calculated to arouse the lower passions. Am I careful to observe modesty and decorum in walking, sitting, resting, dressing, eating, drinking, speaking, and laughing? Do I dread every form of idleness as Satan's opportunity; or, on the contrary, do I provoke his molestations by taking superfluous repose, by watching what goes on in the street, by indulging in day-dreams, by killing time with unnecessary visits, conversation, or reading? Do I faithfully observe what my Institute prescribes about the presence of a Companion? Do I shun, as far as depends on me, all dangerous occasions; such as attractive persons, worldly pageants, suggestive books, and sensual pictures? Do I resist temptations with promptitude, energy, and trust in the Divine Assistance?

With regard to the **Vow and the Virtue of Obedience**, I will examine whether I am in the habit of recognizing, revering, and loving in every Superior, the Adorable Person of Jesus Christ, of Whom he is the true representative, approved by our Holy Father the Pope, the Successor of St. Peter, and hence referred to by our Divine Lord when He said, "Whoever hears you hears Me, and whoever despises you despises Me." Or have I accustomed myself to see in my Superior only a man, endowed with various natural qualities, good or bad, and to obey him from temporal, worldly, or selfish motives? Have I, by word or act, shown disrespect to my Superior? Have I ever criticized the arrangements or orders of my Superior, only inwardly in thought, or also outwardly in speech, scandalizing my Companions and

injuring the peace of the Community? Have I gone so far as to ridicule the manners or to condemn the intentions of my Superior? If so, I should consider that I have failed in the most essential obligation of my Sacred Profession; that I have been a Religious only in name but not in deed; and that I must bend all my efforts to live henceforth a life of Supernatural Obedience animated by Faith. Have I, perhaps, violated my Vow by neglecting to do what I was commanded? Again, do I obey promptly and exactly in execution, lovingly and cheerfully in will, blindly and intelligently in judgment? Am I in the habit of obeying the sign of the bell, whether for community exercises or for individual services, just as if it were the voice of my Divine Master? Or do I presume to absent myself without permission from common duties? And what is my observance of Rule and Custom?

It may be well for me to remember, what some Religious seem to ignore, that irreverence and disobedience towards Superiors are violations of the Fourth Commandment, just as breaches of poverty are of the Seventh, and offenses against chastity of the Sixth. Similarly, one may sin against the Fourth Commandment by disrespect for those who are much older in Religion or for those who have been raised to the Priesthood. In connection with Obedience, I will examine also whether I give to my Superiors a sincere account of whatever belongs to outward discipline, such as employment of time, discharge of duty, state of health; and whether I practise towards my Ghostly Father that childlike openness with regard to matters of conscience—my sins, temptations, penances, and virtues, my observance of rule, my success in prayer, my use of the sacraments,—which is

so strongly recommended by the Saints and so conducive to peace, progress, and perseverance.

I will examine whether I observe **Enclosure**, that is, Separation from the World, both physical and spiritual. Am I in the habit of looking for news from acquaintances or for intercourse with outsiders? Have I ever presumed to communicate with relatives, friends, or pupils, by word or by letter, without the approval of my Superior? Again, do I shun, as far as possible, whatever interferes with recollection; in other words, do I strive to keep my heart constantly united to God, and occupied not with the fleeting shadows of earth but with the lasting realities of heaven, not with the temporal concerns of those whom I have left in the world, but with the spiritual interests of my Divine Lord and His Holy Church, the salvation and sanctification of men? Is it only through obedience and from a supernatural motive, that I assist at games, entertainments, picnics, excursions, and similar gatherings? Do I refrain from unnecessarily looking through secular newspapers or periodicals, and from freely conversing about sports, plays, dances, weddings, or other such worldly events?

I will examine myself, as to my **Spiritual Duties**; whether I perform them through mere routine or put into them fresh fervor and love day after day; whether I am exact in keeping the Additions; whether I apply myself to my Meditation with diligence and devotion from the beginning to the end; whether I give the full time to my Examinations of Conscience, spending it, not in slothful ease and dangerous reverie, but in earnest endeavors to review

and improve my conduct; whether I attend faithfully and energetically to my Particular Examen; whether my assistance at Holy Mass is a real and loving participation in the Adorable Sacrifice of the Cross; whether I make a careful preparation before receiving Communion and afterwards a fervent thanksgiving for not less than fifteen minutes; whether I recite my Vocal Prayers with attention, confidence, and affection; and whether I observe at all Devotional Exercises a suitable and reverential conduct, free from anything that could cause distraction or disedification.

I will examine myself with regard to Practices of **Mortification and Humiliation**, fasting, abstinence, fatiguing labor, corporal affliction, waiting at table, public self-accusation, and similar means of self-denial and self-abasement. Do I embrace every one of these precious opportunities, as far as I am permitted, with an ardent desire of atoning for my past sins and of becoming like to my Crucified Lord? Or am I, also in this vital matter, a slave to routinism and a sample of tepidity, perhaps deceiving myself with the false plea that interior self-denial can be practised without exterior penance? And as to interior penance, have I accepted with resignation and joy the various little hardships that come to me through the disposition of Providence or Superiors? Or have I nourished feelings of displeasure, given signs of impatience, used expressions of anger?

I will examine myself as to my **Daily Occupations**. Do I apply myself to my appointed task from a spirit of cheerful obedience, sincere humility, and ardent charity? In other words, do I labor from supernatural motives; or from natural reasons; for instance,

because I have to in order to get on at all, or because I wish to stand well with the Superior or the Community, or because I like to gratify my natural love of activity, or because I look upon my work as a source of maintenance, a means of support for the House? Do I prefer the humbler employments and the harder duties, at least as far as my strength will allow? And while I am engaged in these occupations, do I strive to keep my heart on God; or do I allow myself to be wholly engrossed with my task, giving way to impatience, precipitation, dissipation, uncharitableness, suspicion, faultfinding?

I will examine myself on **Silence**, whether I have failed in its observance under ordinary circumstances, or have presumed to talk even during times and in places of Great Silence; and whether I break it through childish levity, or through particular friendship, or to vent my uncharitable thoughts and feelings, or perhaps to get others to side with me in my criticism of Superiors. Especially in this last case, I ought to humble myself deeply before God, considering that unless I diligently correct and duly expiate such faults, I run a great risk of eventually forfeiting my Religious Vocation. Again, have I kept strict Silence during these holy Exercises? Except I conscientiously abstain from all unnecessary words, I need not expect to reap from the Retreat any other fruit than an increased responsibility for neglecting the grace of God.

I will examine myself as to my **Speech**, whether I have always been truthful, or whether I have told falsehoods, through vanity, fear, or flattery. Have I misrepresented matters to Superiors in order to gain

my point? Have I made groundless assertions or unwarrantable mental reservations? Am I in the habit of exaggerating things or of using superlatives? Do I strive to be truthful also in my Thoughts, by checking all self-complacency in my work, my talents, or my success, and by not substituting mere fancies for real facts, gratuitous assumptions for solid proofs, silly prejudices or indefensible prepossessions for unbiased opinions? Without cultivating great truthfulness in Thought and Speech, it is impossible to make any headway towards Religious Perfection.

I will examine with regard to **Fraternal Charity**, whether I have offended against this sovereign virtue, in thought, in word, in deed, or by omission. Have I indulged in rash judgments, have I yielded to envy, have I harbored, even for a moment, feelings of resentment? Have I brought unfounded or false accusations against other members of the Community, or reported every detail of their conduct and every word from their lips, as if I were a professional informer or a hired detective? Have I in any other way injured their reputation with Superiors, companions, or outsiders? Or, on the contrary, have I omitted to reveal even such faults as might endanger the good name of the Order and the spiritual welfare of the Brethren? Have I communicated to seculars the little troubles that may have occurred in my Community, or tried to enlist their sympathy in my personal difficulties and sufferings? When I come from another House, do I take care not to talk of its affairs or inmates, except in such wise as will edify my hearers? Or have I on such occasions been a tale-bearer and scandal-monger, the wilful cause of disunion and relaxation?

Again have I been cold and unsympathetic towards my fellow Religious; neglecting to give them the ordinary tokens of esteem and affection; omitting to answer or even to acknowledge their letters; showing no concern for their troubles and sufferings; attributing their ailments to their imagination; taking offense at their peculiarities because different from my own; making no allowance for nationality, temperament, education, age, and so forth; holding them up as cranks because they do not share my views or ways; ignoring, slighting, or exasperating them through either thoughtlessness or malice; finding fault with their discharge of official duties or with their personal habits; ridiculing them because they are more strict in the observance of rule or more fervent in the practice of self-denial?

Do I strive to be present at the common recreation, by taking the necessary precautions not to be hindered from complying with this important duty; or, on the contrary, do I perhaps avail myself of every excuse to live apart from the Community? And how have I managed this daily exercise of Fraternal Charity? Have I been dogmatic, quarrelsome, sarcastic? or unsociable, taciturn, gloomy? Lastly, if I gave any offense or scandal, have I taken care to repair it fully? Have I at least done all I could to cancel my fault? Even for Religious it is well to bear in mind these words of St. John: "If any man says, 'I love God,' and hates his brother, he is a liar. For he who does not love his brother, whom he sees, how can he love God, Whom he does not see?"

Lastly, I will examine whether I have been constant and earnest in striving after the **Perfection of Divine Love**, after intimate Union with God. Have

I been careful and eager to avail myself of all the means put at my disposal by my holy Institute to fulfil this chief obligation of the Religious State, to reach this one object for which I was honored with a Spécial Vocation? Have I at least striven to keep 'alive and nourish in my heart the desire of Evangelical Perfection, the resolution of treading in the footsteps of my holy Founder and his saintly Children? Or have I perhaps been satisfied with the life of an ordinary Christian, avoiding grievous sin but neglecting my spiritual advancement?

Again, instead of working for the approbation of the Most High, have I perhaps degraded myself to labor for the praise of my fellow men, or to curry favor with my Superiors, in a spirit of servility or ambition; endeavoring to ingratiate myself by the simulation of sentiments and opinions I did not entertain, or by the dissimulation of my real thoughts and feelings; by rendering them acts of service that belonged to another's office; by signifying exaggerated or indiscreet approval of their views, their plans, their words, their actions; or by practising any other unworthy tricks and false devices? If so, I have surely good reason to fear that I too shall be counted amongst those who have received their reward here below, and who for the sake of some passing gratification or some trifling preferment have jeopardized their eternal crown of bliss and glory in Heaven. Besides, who can estimate the immense harm which the introduction of this political spirit into a Religious Community may cause not only to the actual members but even to many future generations? Oh! if in my past conduct I detect any indications of my having been a time-server, a sycophant, a politician, an intriguer, I must use every effort to break com-

pletely and forever with such a detestable, subversive, and irreligious procedure.

It is after this manner that we should make a Thorough Examination of our own actual condition, humbly and uprightly, in the presence of God; our All-Knowing and All-Holy Judge, setting aside the deceitful excuses of self-love and despising all the perfidious pretexts of Satan. But we must not rest satisfied with a clear knowledge of our spiritual ailments; we should exert ourselves still more earnestly to conceive a true sorrow, an intense contrition for our moral failings. For this end, we should help ourselves also by a wholesome fear, remembering that God is not mocked, that we must beware of exhausting His Patience and Mercy by our folly and ingratitude, that by our shortcomings and our sins we are in danger of losing the priceless pearl of our holy Vocation, which the Saints sought and kept at the cost of the greatest privations and sufferings. Yet we should also bear in mind that God will not despise a contrite and humble heart, and that like St. Paul, we can do all things in Him Who strengthens us. Thus this Exercise will serve not only as an immediate preparation for a sincere and sorrowful acknowledgment of our past offenses, but also as a powerful incentive to a real and lasting improvement.

SIN, INORDINATION, AND WORLDLINESS

Introductory Remarks.—One of the effects of these Exercises on Sin should be greater delicacy of conscience. Delicacy of conscience does not consist in scrupulosity but in tenderness. When an affectionate child, like “the Little Flower of Jesus,” has given displeasure to its devoted parents, it perceives at once an inward reproach and is filled with shame and grief. We, Religious, are the favorite children of God, our Creator and Lord, but we do not all correspond as we ought to His ineffable love. When through human frailty we commit an offense against Him, we not seldom go on unconcerned as though nothing were amiss. Even when we confess our faults at the feet of the priest, who on earth takes the place of our Father in Heaven, we sometimes do so without any feeling of confusion or any pang of contrition. Sin is the only evil God really hates and detests: we say, indeed, that we detest our sins, but we show that we are far from detesting ourselves because of our sins. If we had a more delicate conscience, we should shed tears of true compunction in every examen as well as in every confession. It is in order to obtain this precious grace of greater delicacy of conscience that we should continue to apply ourselves with all possible fervor to these Exercises of the First Week.

Subject of this Meditation.—A Repetition of the two preceding exercises, followed by a triple Colloquy.

Composition of Place.—My soul imprisoned in this corruptible body, and my whole being, body and soul, exiled on this miserable earth, among brute beasts.

Let me reflect on this picture. How has it come to pass that my soul is actually imprisoned in this corruptible body? My soul, an immortal spirit, created to the image and likeness of the Ever-Blessed Trinity and redeemed by the blood of our Adorable Savior; my soul, made by sanctifying grace a temple of the Holy Ghost, adorned with the theological and moral virtues as well as with the seven gifts of the Divine Spirit; my soul, destined to enjoy the vision of God for all eternity in heaven, after praising, revering, and serving her Creator and Lord a short time here on earth;—this soul of mine, so highly favored, instead of availing herself of the body which she informs and animates to promote the glory of the Most High, by holding it subject to reason and directing all its energies towards the attainment of her End, has surrendered to it, has allowed herself to be ruled by its brutal instincts, and has yielded to them even so far as to fail in her duty of serving the Almighty. And why? Simply in order not to give any displeasure to this corruptible flesh, taken from dead matter and soon to be consigned to the grave, a mass of putrefaction. And the body, by this continual subjection of the soul has acquired such a mastery over her, that now she finds in it, instead of a useful instrument to serve God, a tangle of almost insurmountable obstacles that fetter her liberty just as a prisoner is prevented by the walls of his narrow cell not only from going out but even from freely moving within.

Besides, I am in exile on this miserable earth. What shame and confusion for a person of high fam-

ily and splendid endowments, to see himself shut up in a squalid and darksome prison! But how much greater would be his shame and confusion if, in addition to this, he should find himself exiled to a cold and dreary region, far from the society of his acquaintances, among a rude and savage people? The true country of the soul that serves God faithfully is Heaven. But when a soul has become enslaved to the body, she can no longer be admitted to her glorious home and drags along her wretched existence as it were in exile on this inhospitable earth.

But what is far worse, I am actually relegated among the brute beasts. If it is a terrible disgrace for a man of noble extraction to be obliged to share the company of ruffians and outlaws, what would it be to have to herd with filthy animals? Yet such is the self-chosen lot of any one that gives free rein to his lower appetites and has no other rule for his conduct than pain and pleasure. For he lives, in very truth, as if he were devoid of reason and judgment, like an irrational beast.

Petition.—Profound shame and genuine confusion joined to intense contrition and burning tears, for all my iniquities.

First Part. A Repetition of the Two Preceding Meditations.

This Repetition will prove very beneficial, if, in going over the successive points of The Triple Sin and My Personal Sins, we take care to impress on our minds and to treasure up in our hearts particularly those considerations in which we have experienced either a stronger disgust or a greater relish. The points of The Triple Sin were: the sin of the

Angels, the sin of our First Parents, and the sin of a Lost Soul. The points of My Personal Sins were: an indictment of all my sins; their frenzy, fiendishness, and villainy; my insignificance, my bodily corruption, and my spiritual misery; lastly, my ignorance, weakness, and malice in contrast with the Wisdom, Power, and Goodness of God, my Lord and Creator, Who awaited my conversion so patiently and so lovingly.

In this Repetition, then, I should strive to bring home to myself that, if ever I committed even one grievous sin, I acted like a maniac, a fiend, a villain, and deserved to be buried for all eternity in the flames of Hell with the demons and the damned; that if ever I committed even one venial sin, deliberately offending God, my Absolute Master and Supreme Benefactor, I did something very foolish, cruel, and base, while moreover I put myself on the highroad to mortal sin and to everlasting perdition. I should note particularly that all this holds good of sin committed by man, as he is by Unregenerate Nature, an intelligent and free being. How inconceivably more heinous, therefore, sin must be in a person raised by Sanctifying Grace to the dignity of an adopted Child of God, in a soul daily nourished with the Adorable body of Christ our Lord, in a religious entirely consecrated to the Special Service of the Most High!

It cannot be emphasized too strongly that all without exception stand very much in need of the graces asked for in these meditations on sin; namely, real confusion, deep shame, ardent contrition, abundant tears. For either we have as yet kept our baptismal innocence or else we have contracted some grievous guilt. Now, on the one hand, those favored souls who,

owing to a most unmerited mercy of God and in spite of their numerous inordinations and venial offenses, were prevented from falling into mortal sin, should labor with great earnestness to conceive a lively and lasting contrition for all their past infidelities, because otherwise, not realizing that their preservation from spiritual death is a pure gift of God, they will remain very deficient in humility and watchfulness, and consequently may find themselves sooner or later exposed to strong temptations and terrible dangers. This is why some Religious that left the world before they knew of its corruption, after spending many years within the holy walls of the convent, sometimes even lose their Vocation and die like Reprobates. Others, without going quite so far, habitually indulge in a multiplicity of venial faults, and consequently lead very imperfect and unhappy lives, precisely because they never humbled themselves completely in their own inmost hearts, in the sight of Almighty God, at the feet of the Minister of Christ.

But, on the other hand, those Religious who have had the misfortune of committing mortal sin, just as they have surpassed their Companions in wickedness so they should also strive to surpass them in penance. Now, it does happen that the contrary is found, either because such persons never yet exerted themselves to obtain that thorough confusion and ardent contrition with which even a single mortal sin should fill every upright soul, or else because they neglected to intensify these dispositions of shame and sorrow in proportion to their growing knowledge of God and their increasing years in Religion. As a consequence, they take no practical means to avoid dangerous occasions of sin, nor do they give them-

selves earnestly to exercises of prayer and self-denial. Also Religious of this description have good reason to fear that their lukewarmness and routinism will eventually drag them down to spiritual ruin and eternal perdition.

Therefore, to whichever class we belong, we must strive to produce genuine fruits of penance. For this purpose, we should apply ourselves to these meditations on sin with the utmost energy, so that, for the future our customary acts of contrition may be quite different from what they have been but too often in the past. Evidently, the deeper our confusion, the greater our shame, the more intense our grief, and the more copious our tears, the more certain and thorough also will be our amendment, the more constant and rapid likewise our progress in perfection. And thus our Heavenly Father, Who permits evil solely in order to draw good from it, will render our past offenses and our actual failings subservient to our sanctification.

Second Part. A Triple Colloquy.

This Triple Colloquy is recommended by St. Ignatius to complete the cleansing of our soul from sin, of our heart from inordinate tendencies, and of our mind from worldly views; in other terms, to eliminate from our lives, from our thoughts, desires, words, and actions, everything that may be in the least displeasing to the Most Holy Trinity, to our Adorable Savior, Jesus Christ, or to our Loving Mother, Mary Immaculate. For prayer is the chief remedy to cure the weakness of our will and the darkness of our intellect. The First Colloquy is directed to our Lady, that she may implore for me from her Son and Lord these three graces: first, an intimate Knowledge and

real Hatred of all my Sins, so that I may never commit them again; second, a keen Perception and profound Abhorrence of my manifold Inordinations, so that I may amend my whole conduct; third, a clear Recognition and utter Detestation of the World, so that I may rid myself of everything worldly or vain. The Second Colloquy is addressed to our Divine Redeemer that He may obtain for me the same three graces from the Eternal Father. The Third Colloquy is made to God the Father that He, in His Infinite Mercy, may grant me these same three graces.

First Grace: an intimate Knowledge and real Hatred of all my Sins, that I may never commit them again. My hatred of Sin will always be commensurate with my sense of moral evil. It is precisely because I grasp as yet but very imperfectly the true character of Sin, its frenzy, its fiendishness, and its villainy, that I am so negligent about the avoidance of temptation and so remiss in the practice of penance. Natural reason alone is not enough for this; I need supernatural illumination, to give me that correct estimate of Sin which will make me flee with horror from any future consent and will cause me to embrace eagerly every means of expiating my past indulgence. The more fully I shall become convinced of this evident truth, that Sin is the greatest of all evils and, in fact, the only evil I have to fear, the more spontaneous will be my flight from any temptation to Sin however alluring its aspect or painful its rejection, and the more insatiable will grow my longing for every form of mortification and humiliation to purify my heart from the effects of Sin. Having bound myself to aim at perfection, I must not only abhor Mortal Sin but I must also be determined for nothing in the world to commit a single deliberate

Venial Sin. And as regards semi-deliberate Venial Sin, though I cannot hope here below to eradicate this evil altogether, yet I must constantly strive to render my falls both fewer in number and less serious in character.

Second Grace: a keen Realization and profound Abhorrence of my manifold Inordinations, that I may amend my whole conduct. Since Inordination is the root of Sin, I am not likely to keep from Sin, unless I labor to destroy Inordination. My past life has been full of Inordination, of spiritual Disorder, inasmuch as I have habitually thought, spoken, and acted, without first considering the Adorable Will of God, my Creator and Lord. If I am really in earnest about my amendment, I must cease to have my own way, to do as I please, to yield slavishly to the impulses of my fallen nature. It is this widespread leaven of Inordination that till now has vitiated by far the greater part of my conscious existence, and prevented me from devoting all my energy to the service of the Most High. For every Inordination is an exhibition of injustice and ingratitude towards God, a piece of self-stultification and self-injury, an abuse and profanation of the creature. With what ardor, therefore, I should implore this grace of keenly discerning and deeply abhorring all the Disorder of my past life, and of henceforth regulating the activity of my senses and faculties only by the Divine Will in whatever way manifested.

Third Grace: a clear Recognition and utter Detestation of the World, that I may completely rid my mind of all its deceit and vanity. Just as Sin is intimately related to Inordination so Inordination is closely connected with Worldliness. Accordingly, the Apostle St. John exhorts us in these words:

"Love not the world nor the things that are in the world. If any love the world, the charity of the Father is not in him." God and the World are two rivals that cannot be served at the same time. The World comprises all those who lead a merely natural existence and labor exclusively for earthly interests, while entirely neglectful of the supernatural life and of the endless hereafter. Their chief concern is "to have a good time." Hence, the World embodies the spirit of naturalism, materialism, and unbelief. It stands for the unrestrained and unremitting pursuit of health, comfort, enjoyment, wealth, distinction, and independence. Its views and doctrines are diametrically opposed to the principles and teachings of Christ and His Saints, to the Evangelical Counsels and the Eight Beatitudes. It is wholly inspired and controlled by its ruler, the Devil. By declaring that He did not pray for the World, our Lord wished to impress upon us its utter wickedness. The World, in fact, hates Christ and all His true followers.

I was infected with this worldly spirit already before my birth, I lived many years in the midst of this pestilential atmosphere, and even in Religion I cannot altogether escape its poisonous breath. Our secular newspapers and periodicals vie with one another in daily making propaganda for the World. No wonder, therefore, if I should detect in myself a more or less considerable residue of Worldliness: worldly views, worldly maxims, worldly desires, worldly manners, admiration of worldly display, interest in worldly pastimes, appreciation of worldly applause, reliance on worldly means. No wonder, if even within the sacred cloister I should have given expression to sentiments that are neither based on sound reason nor instilled by the Holy Ghost,

but echo the proud and senseless spirit of the World; as, for instance, "Why should I still be treated like a little novice?"—"I am not going to let everybody walk over me."—"Without money we can do nothing."—"We must keep abreast of the times."—"Corporal penances were all right in the Middle Ages when people had little else to do than to pray, but they do not suit the hustle and bustle of modern society."—"We must take care not to offend people by our poor clothes."—"In order to know how to deal with our fellow men, we need to be posted on the things in which they are interested." I should pray, then, for abundant grace, not only to recognize clearly the blatant sophistry and worthless tinsel of the World, but also to detest it so thoroughly as to break forever with its deceitful maxims and pernicious tendencies.

In conclusion, let us strive to make this Triple Colloquy with all possible humility, confidence, and fervor. If we should derive from our whole Retreat no other fruit than these Three Graces, it would still be one of the best we ever made. It is because we have till now been wanting in this real Hatred of Sin, this profound Abhorrence of Inordination, this utter Detestation of Worldliness, it is because there has been as yet no entire conversion of our mind and heart to God, the Absolute Holiness, the Sovereign Truth, the Infinite Goodness, that our desires to advance in perfection have proved so ineffectual and ephemeral.

In making this Triple Colloquy, says St. Ignatius, "I should in spirit prostrate myself before the throne of the Eternal Father, at whose right is seated Christ our Lord, and next to Him the most Holy Virgin Mary, all three looking down on me with eyes full

of the tenderest pity and love." Then, addressing first our Heavenly Mother, I should plead my cause with her, in childlike simplicity and candor, insisting on my extreme misery, on my pressing need, on her marvelous preservation from all stain of Sin or Inordination or Worldliness, on her irresistible influence over the Heart of Jesus, supplicating and conjuring her by all she suffered here on earth but especially under the cross to obtain for me these Three Graces; and then recite the Angelical Salutation. In the same manner I should afterwards, with her assistance, have recourse to our Adorable Savior, reminding Him of His loving holocaust on Calvary and appealing to His sacred wounds; and add the Anima Christi. Lastly, through the intercession of our Blessed Lady and the mediation of our Divine Redeemer, I should present my petitions with unbounded confidence to the Eternal Father; and conclude by saying the Lord's Prayer.

A. M. D. G.

“MY CHILD, GIVE ME YOUR HEART.”

THIRD DAY

PATRON: St. Francis Borgia.

MOTTO: “Do penance, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.”

SPIRIT: Hatred and horror of sin, inordination, and worldliness.

READING: Imitation; Bk. I, C. 6, 7, 14, 16, 22, 24.

Bk. III, C. 20, 31, 32, 53, 55, 59.

Gospels; St. Luke, C. 12, 15.

Strive to intensify more and more your sorrow for sin and your desire of penance. Bear in mind that the fruit of this Retreat will be proportioned to the humility and sincerity with which you seek to manifest your past faults and your present dispositions to your Confessor.

HELL

Introductory Remarks.—While the consideration of Hell tends directly to inspire fear, it indirectly helps also to enkindle love. Yet even fear is something we cannot afford to discard as long as we are living in this world. Many a glorious martyr would have been vanquished by his protracted torments, except for the superhuman patience derived from this Divine warning: "Fear not those who kill the body and are not able to kill the soul; but rather fear Him Who can destroy both soul and body in hell." If we could realize the deadly hatred that Satan bears us and the violent temptations by which we may be assailed, we would not let a single day pass without seriously reflecting on Hell. Exemption from big trials, enjoyment of good health, success in our work, the esteem of the Faithful, the affection of our Companions, the confidence of our Superiors, are all apt to envelop us gradually in the darkness of Self-Complacency, to weaken imperceptibly our hold on Sanctifying Grace, and to expose us to the imminent danger of Mortal Sin. Woe to the Religious that is not penetrated with a lively fear of Hell!

However, besides fostering a salutary fear, the thought of the eternal punishment meted out to sin fills the repentant soul with intense gratitude and love. It was, no doubt, for this reason that St. Francis Borgia, even after he had attained a high degree of holiness, frequently meditated on Hell, declaring that he derived great benefit from this

exercise every time he made it. But to secure this result, it is necessary to make Hell an actual reality to ourselves, not looking upon it as a plausible opinion or a philosophical speculation but as a certain and awful truth, revealed and vouched for by God Himself. In the Gospels alone there are at least fifteen distinct references to this place of everlasting punishment, of unquenchable fire, recorded from the lips of our Divine Lord. For Catholics, however, and all the more for Religious, it ought to be enough to know on this point the explicit teaching of His Holy Infallible Church.

Subject of this Meditation.—The endless affliction of the unrepentant sinner in Hell.

Composition of Place.—The length, breadth, and depth of Hell; or else, the narrow space destined there for me if I should continue in my tepidity, such as was shown in a vision to St. Teresa to rouse her to greater fervor.

Petition.—An intimate realization of the pains suffered by the Lost; in order that if ever through my faults—my inordinations and venial sins—I should forget the love of the Eternal Lord, at least the fear of punishment may prevent me from falling into mortal sin.

First Point. The Pains of Hell.

The Pain of Loss: “Depart from Me.”—This peremptory command means separation from God as He is our Supernatural End and Recompense; in other words, it means our being once for all excluded by the Most High from that Intuitive Vision which

would make us share in His own infinite Happiness. Here on earth the loss of fortune, health, or companionship, tends to fill us with sadness; what, then, must be the effect of losing God, of this immeasurable and irreparable Loss? To understand fully what this Pain of Loss implies, we ought to have experienced already the bliss and glory of the Saints in Heaven. But as such is not the case, we can only say that the Reprobate are forever deprived of that Divine Vision which unceasingly keeps the Angels and the Blessed immersed in an ocean of ecstatic delight; a delight ever new and ever full, without any shadow of alteration or any fear of diminution; a delight such as, in the words of St. Paul, no eye has seen, no ear has heard, and no human heart has ever been able to conceive. The Reprobate, however, suffer not only the absence of this unspeakable happiness, but also an indescribable anguish arising from the fact that they were positively created for the enjoyment of the Infinite Truth and Goodness. The Loss of God, consequently, leaves in the souls of the Damned a frightful void which nothing can ever replenish. Fully aware that God is supremely happy, their impotent hatred fills them with extreme bitterness; while the glory of the Saints and Angels, from whose society they are forever excluded, consumes them with fiendish envy.

Moreover, the Reprobate cannot help acknowledging the Sovereign Beauty and Loveliness of God; and though irrevocably banished from His Presence, though forever deprived of His Love, yet, by the very law of their being, they vehemently long for Him and are irresistibly drawn towards Him, inasmuch as they clearly perceive in Him the sum total of happiness. For there exists in all souls a natural craving for

happiness. During life, this immense desire is drawn off by the distractions of sensible objects. In death, the world of sense is left behind together with the body, and the soul enters into a solitude where nothing remains to make it happy but God alone, so that its whole energy is absorbed by its longing for God. At the same time, through their own perverse choice, the Lost are animated by a fierce hatred, an insane aversion for God, as the insurmountable obstacle to their selfishness and pride. Hence they are being continually attracted and repelled by one and the same object. And these two conflicting tendencies, namely, this powerful inclination to God and this strong aversion for God, will tear asunder, so to speak, the Reprobate Spirit for all eternity, causing it to undergo an everlasting death or rather a never-abating agony, incomparably more excruciating than that inflicted by any torments on earth. Still, since we can never form directly an adequate idea of this Pain of Loss, let us strive to realize it indirectly by considering for a few moments the far less terrible Pain of Sense.

This Pain of Sense we may take to be the effect of the Divine Malediction expressed in the words, "you cursed." The Lost are separated from God, not only as the Infinite Perfection, but also as the Sole Source of every physical and moral good, of every natural blessing. Their unbounded pride would make them reject His gifts, and so renders them incapable of receiving anything at all. Hence they suffer utter destitution; that is, the most complete privation of whatever is necessary to supply their manifold and ever-pressing needs. What hardship it is to be without food or drink for an entire day, or even for a few hours; what misery it is to be deprived of one's eyes,

feet, or fingers! What, then, must it be to be absolutely and forever deprived of everything? Dives imploring the boon of a drop of water in vain, such is the object-lesson furnished us by the Son of God, the Infallible Truth. In brief, each of the Lost will be filled with every kind of affliction to the full of his capacity.

In Hell, consequently, there is no action but all is passion; there is no pleasurable exertion of any kind, nothing except conscious suffering: a punishment of moral stagnation. In Hell there is complete and universal disorder, in the faculties of the soul as well as in the senses and organs of the body: a punishment of spiritual negligence. In Hell there is no light except to reveal to the Lost the terrors of their prison; but all else is shrouded in impenetrable gloom: a punishment of unguarded looks and dangerous readings. In Hell there is no sound except such as can afflict the hearing: but otherwise nothing breaks the absolute silence, the horrid stillness of the tomb: a punishment of the abuse of speech and the craving for voluptuous music. Worse than all this, however, in Hell there reigns a universal and deadly hatred: a punishment of the irregular love of creatures. The Damned, filled with a most vehement detestation, a most profound loathing for everything created, are continually cursing the hour of their birth, the authors of their existence, the persons with whom they were acquainted, the objects on account of which they sinned, and especially their own selves. In Hell, then, there is no affection, no friendship, no love.

While the Reprobate are thus completely abandoned and isolated in their unutterable wretchedness, only their vices remain with them to exercise a despotic sway over their entire being and to inflict

on them a ceaseless persecution. This inevitable result of not practising penance and self-denial begins already here on earth and is a matter of daily experience. In fact, our greatest misery and keenest suffering is brought on us by our own vices in proportion as we get enslaved to them. What must it be when their tyranny has become absolute and when all gratification has been rendered impossible? Thus gluttony, avarice, lust, pride, will each torment its helpless victim forever in Hell.

The Pain of Fire: "into everlasting fire."—We know from Revelation that the Lost in Hell will be punished, both in soul and in body, by this "everlasting Fire prepared for the Devil and his angels," that is, called first into existence for the punishment of the Demons the moment they were cast into Hell. It will afflict each Reprobate in exact proportion to the number and gravity of his sins, and each member of his body in the measure in which it has been the instrument of evil. "They shall be salted with fire," says our Divine Lord. It is certainly real and physical, but whether the suffering caused by it is altogether distinct from the Pain of Sense just considered, is not certain. At all events, even if not distinct, it furnishes us with a different aspect of the Pain of Sense, and so renders our knowledge and appreciation more complete.

The proud, rebellious spirit, then, is tormented through the instrumentality of a physical Fire, and it is deprived of its liberty through the agency of brute matter. We know what frightful pain may be caused by our earthly fire; yet, in comparison with the sufferings inflicted by the Fire of Hell, according to St. Augustine, the former is only like a painted fire, or like the picture of a fire. Now, unless we have

a very vivid imagination, a mere pictorial reproduction of a fire would surely cause us but little inconvenience. Such we may take the fire of earth to be when contrasted with that of Hell. But even if it were no worse than our earthly fire, who would not shudder with horror at the prospect of being chained down on a burning pile of wood or shut up in a roaring blast-furnace or submerged in a caldron of molten metal, and that not for a second, not for a minute, not for an entire day, or a week, or a month, or a year, but forever and ever? Yet no such crude imagery as this can at all approach the tremendous reality.

And in the midst of these awful afflictions the Damned are devoured with the most intense Remorse. It is a matter of daily observation how painfully men are affected by the loss of a valuable object, the missing of a splendid opportunity, or the failure of a promising enterprise, when the blame is entirely their own. So each Reprobate Soul keeps repeating to itself incessantly: "It is all my own doing, my own choice, my own fault. I insisted on having my own way, and I got it. Now I am forever buried in Hell; in spite of the sufferings of Christ, in spite of the intercession of Mary, in spite of the prayers of the Saints and Angels, in spite of the example of parents, the help of friends, the advice of priests, in spite of all the numberless favors and special graces lavished on me by God, I am lost."

Hence, in conclusion, the worst calamities of this world, all the multitudinous horrors of cyclones, floods, earthquakes, conflagrations, collisions, and shipwrecks, of plagues, famines, revolutions, and wars, are but the distant foreshadowings of what will come upon the unrepentant sinner. This, then, is what I have deserved as often as I committed a

grievous sin. This is what I should be suffering already now, and even since many years, if God in His Admirable Mercy had not so patiently prepared and awaited my conversion, if Christ, my Adorable Lord, had not died on the Cross, in the bitterest anguish and ignominy, for Love of me and on account of my Sins. This is the final result of wanting to have my own way, of wishing to be my own master, of not submitting to those appointed to rule and direct me, of following slavishly my likes and dislikes, my blind propensities and foolish repugnances. And this is where my Sins, yea, even my Inordinations will yet lead me inevitably, unless like St. Teresa, I exert all my energy to cooperate with Divine Grace for a thorough and lasting Reformation of Life.

Second Point. The Eternity of Hell.

The Fact.—Though Eternity cannot be expressed in terms applicable to time, yet probably the simplest way in which we can form some imperfect notion of Eternity is by means of an endless succession of years. Hence we may say, for instance, that after a hundred thousand years Hell will still be only beginning, and that after a hundred thousand million years it will not have advanced any further than when the Lost Soul first received her sentence of damnation. But we must bear in mind that the Eternity of Hell is in reality far worse than all this, inasmuch as it presses on the Reprobate at each instant with its entire weight. Almost any hardship here on earth becomes bearable, provided the end be not too far distant and be certain to come within a limited number of hours, days, weeks, or even months. But if our sufferings are prolonged indefinitely for many years, how the dark prospect seems to crush our spirit and

fill our soul with such sadness and melancholy as actually to bring about death. What, then, must be the anguish caused by the certainty that they will never come to an end; and sufferings not of earth, but of Hell?

The Reason of this Eternity is the Divine Decree that death should fix man's destiny forever after, either in Heaven or in Hell; in other words, the irrevocable sentence of the Sovereign Judge. But a deeper reason lies in the very nature of mortal sin, which of itself is irremediable. Just as the Blessed are confirmed in grace and love and holiness, so the Lost are confirmed, or rather abandoned, in guilt and hate and wickedness. While yet on earth, they abused their liberty; while it was yet in their power to listen to grace and to return to God, they refused to avail themselves of His Mercy; now no more grace is offered them since the period of probation is past, and accordingly their evil will remains forever turned away from God, full of sin, full of rebellion, full of pride.

As a consequence, Hell is not only Everlasting but also Invariable. There will be not one moment of respite, not the least token of sympathy, not the faintest glimmer of relief. No companions except the hateful Reprobates and malignant Demons. No hope, forever; and hence the most absolute, the most frantic Despair. Therefore, in opposition to the Eternity of Heaven, which is the actual, total, and simultaneous possession of a life of bliss and glory, whose duration shall have no end; the Eternity of Hell may rightly be called the actual, total, and simultaneous infliction of an agony, whose duration shall have no end; in other words, an Everlasting Death, or rather an Everlasting Dying, to be suffered

by the Damned with unmitigated intensity, at every single instant, both soul and body being made to undergo unceasingly all the torments of which they are capable, in exact proportion to all the natural gifts and supernatural graces which they did or could receive during this earthly existence, but which they deliberately, obstinately, and scornfully squandered and rejected. Is this, then, Hell? No, this is only a very imperfect description of it. Just as Heaven is entirely beyond our intellectual grasp, so is Hell.

Third Point. The Way to Hell for Religious.

How did they get there, these wretched souls who once, perhaps, were members of this same Order or Congregation, had passed through the noviceship, had been admitted to the vows, had made the annual retreat a number of times, and even had filled several important offices? No fervent person can suddenly fall into mortal sin. This Fire was "prepared for the Devil and his Angels," not for Men, not for Religious, not for Priests. If we could ask some of them how they got into this place of torment, what would they answer? Being completely isolated from one another, they could only reply in the singular.

"First; there was lack of earnest correspondence to the Grace of God; no desire, no effort to practise penance, self-denial, and self-abasement; relaxation in regular observance, in religious obedience, and in fraternal charity; frequent inordinations; gradual substitution of the natural for the supernatural; I became satisfied with avoiding deliberate Venial Sin.

"Next; there was routinism in spiritual things; partial omission of prayer; negligent performance of duty; liberty of the senses, no guard over eyes and touch; giving the body every little gratification and

comfort that could be had; taking in all the distractions and amusements that offered themselves; habitual and wilful transgression of the rules; I did not stop at anything except deliberate Mortal Sin.

“Lastly; there were confessions without true sorrow or sincere purpose; communions with neither preparation nor thanksgiving; giving free rein to unlawful curiosity; seeking proximate occasions of sin, books, places, persons; then total neglect of prayer; grievous violations of the vows; complete abandonment of my vocation; and thus I fell into Consummate Pride.” Such in outline would be the reply of almost every Lost Religious.

How, then, can I afford to make light of matters of such inconceivable importance as those which concern my Eternal Salvation? Must I not rather be most eager to give up everything and anything that may prove an obstacle or constitute a danger? And how highly I should esteem my Vocation, how sincerely devoted I should be to my Community, for the manifold and powerful helps afforded me to get farther and farther away from Hell! What, if I had been left in the world?

But this esteem of my Vocation, this devotion to my Institute, ought to manifest itself in the first place by my exact observance of the rules. How can a Religious hope for perseverance in his holy State, if he is not in downright earnest about keeping its laws and customs? This implies that when through human frailty we commit a breach of rule, we humbly accuse ourselves of our fault both in our sacramental confession and in the weekly chapter, eager to make any satisfaction that may be imposed upon us and determined for the future to avoid a similar transgression at any cost. Let us not delude ourselves with

the notion that we can break our rules without sin. For, though this may be true in the abstract, it hardly ever holds in the concrete. Let us rather guide ourselves by the principles and maxims of the Saints. Our spiritual insight is blunted; they were enlightened from on high.

Besides, in order to persevere in our holy Vocation, we must lead really penitential lives. No Religious is safe who does not practise in addition to Interior Renunciation also Exterior Mortification; such as self-denial in food, drink, cold, heat, comfort, and rest; restraint of the various senses, especially of the touch, taste, and sight; affliction of the body by kneeling on the bare floor, by praying with arms extended, or by using the customary instruments of penance. This chastisement of the body is one of the most efficacious means for checking our Sensuality and humbling our Pride, for obtaining Recollection and regaining Fervor, and thus for increasing our inward Peace, our true Happiness.

Colloquy.—Once more kneeling at the foot of the Cross, I will give expression to my contrition, my gratitude, and my determination of using henceforth all the means afforded me by my holy Institute to persevere, at any cost, until death. It was to save me from the everlasting torments of Hell which I had deserved for my many sins, that Jesus, the Son of God, most lovingly embraced the unspeakable agony and infamy of His crucifixion; and, in return, relying solely on His grace, I will promise Him again, in all sincerity and humility, to practise every permissible penance for my past faults, and to make any sacrifice that may be helpful to my sanctification.—Our Father.

After finishing my review of this Meditation, I may also represent to myself the immense multitude of souls that are already in Hell, either because they would not believe in Christ, or because they refused to keep the Commandments; that is, either for lack of Supernatural Faith or for lack of Good Works. How many were lost before the Coming of our Lord, how many even during His Stay on earth, and how many again after His Ascension! Alas, what frightful ruin caused by Sensuality and Pride! How thankful I ought to be that God did not call me into existence during those dark ages when the whole world was groaning under the dominion of Satan, or that He did not give me my being during these modern times in the midst of some idolatrous nation or in the bosom of an irreligious family! If with all my advantages of birth and education I committed so many sins, what should I not have done under less favorable circumstances? O wonderful preference of Divine Love for me, saved out of such countless numbers of souls, many of whom, if they had received the same graces as I, would have corresponded to them so much better! But while they were justly condemned to Hell, God has till now only shown me the most tender Pity and Mercy.

Nevertheless, all those who are now lost forever were once truly destined like myself for Everlasting Bliss. How, then, did they happen to perish eternally? Many went astray for want of apostolic men to teach them the truths of Revealed Faith, to set them the example of Meritorious Works; many lived and died in Sin, because there was none to pray, labor, and suffer for their Conversion. And the same holds good of all those millions and millions in every part of the globe who are actually in imminent dan-

ger of Damnation. Whose heart would not melt with pity at this thought? Whose breast would not be inflamed with zeal? It is also for their Salvation, that I should henceforth apply myself in real earnest to my own Sanctification, by the exercise of Prayer, Penance, and Charity, by the practice of Poverty, Chastity, and Obedience.

THE KINGDOM OF CHRIST

Introductory Remarks.—Let us suppose a certain man has been appointed directly by God Himself to rule all Christians. This king issues a proclamation to his subjects informing them that, in virtue of his Divine commission, he intends to subjugate the whole country of the infidels, and that those who wish to follow him in this glorious campaign will have to share with him its various hardships in order that afterwards they may likewise share his certain victory. Surely, every loyal subject would eagerly accept such a benevolent and liberal offer; and any one who did not, would incur the just blame and contempt of all his fellows.

St. Ignatius uses this dramatic reference to a temporal ruler in order to fix our attention on Christ, our Heavenly King, and on His paramount claims to our devoted service in the Spiritual Conquest of the World. While meditating on Hell, we were filled with dismay and pity at the sight of the immense multitude of men who are actually in danger of everlasting perdition. But the Son of God has come down upon earth to bring about their salvation. Therefore, if we are sincerely desirous of assisting our brethren, we should examine on what conditions we may be allowed to accompany our Divine Savior in this merciful enterprise and by what means we can become most efficient in this supernatural campaign.

Subject of this Meditation.—The Call of Christ our Lord.

Composition of Place.—The towns and villages, through which Christ our Lord passed preaching the Gospel: on the sunny hills of Judea, the fertile plains of Galilee, and the lovely shores of Genesareth. This includes every locality where the words of Christ our King actually went forth, and serves to remind us that there is question, not of a fictitious, but of a real call.

Petition.—Grace to listen to the Call of Christ, that I may thoroughly understand my Religious Vocation and generously correspond to this Divine Favor.

First Point. How Christ Calls All Men.

“If we should admire,” says St. Ignatius, “the summons of the temporal king to his subjects, how much more worthy of our consideration it is to see Christ our Lord, the Eternal King, and before Him the whole human race, all of whom and each in particular He calls, saying: ‘My will is to conquer the entire world and all My enemies, and so to enter into the glory of My Father. Whoever, therefore, desires to come with Me must labor with Me, in order that following Me in hardship he may likewise follow Me in glory.’”

The Person of Christ our Lord.—This is the same Divine Person Whom, in the meditations on Sin, I beheld nailed to a cross, wondering how He, the Almighty Creator, could have condescended to become Man, and from everlasting life could have come down to temporal death, to expire in torments for my crimes. This is the same Adorable Savior, Whose admirable Mercy and singular Predilection—as I considered in the meditation on Hell—are the only cause why I am not already burning in that unquenchable

fire, like so many millions of men condemned for fewer offenses, perhaps, than I committed or even for one single mortal sin. This is the King of Kings, the God of Infinite Majesty, to Whose boundless Love I have till now corresponded with so much ingratitude, but Whom in future I desire to serve with all my heart, by applying myself to the practice of every Virtue, to the observance of every Rule, and to the performance of every Duty.

His Actions.—He stands “before the whole human race,” as their True and only Sovereign Lord, by nature as God and by grace as Man. Oh! may He be soon acknowledged as such by all; may His kingdom be soon extended over the entire earth. “He calls all and each in particular.” All are called absolutely to follow Him by the profession of the Faith and the observance of the Commandments; and, besides, all are called, at least conditionally, to the practice of the Evangelical Counsels. I too have been called, but I was favored with a Special Vocation, that is, I was invited in an absolute manner to the embracing of the Counsels, to the Perfection of Charity, to Sanctity. Christ also said to me, “if you will be perfect,” while at the same time He inspired me with the desire to become perfect.

How can I ever prove my gratitude for so wonderful a grace, bestowed on one so undeserving of the Divine Attention? What did the Most High discern in me that should have moved Him to such liberality, except my nothingness and my sinfulness? And I am still being called day after day, by the prompting of His Holy Spirit, by the disposal of my Superiors, by the exhortation of my Rules, to a more faithful following of my Heavenly King. In other words, my Vocation did not cease at my taking of the Vows, but

is continuous and ever more urgent. Oh! may I never be deaf to that Sacred Call, may I not rest satisfied with merely keeping up the fervor of my noviceship—"to have never lost the fervor of one's noviceship" is at best a very doubtful praise—but especially during this Retreat may I be attentive and obedient to that Divine Call as to the Voice of my only Beloved. May I welcome His Call to an ever closer Imitation, may I embrace this Vocation to an ever greater Holiness, with the utmost alacrity and generosity!

His Words.—His Royal Proclamation is brief: "My will is to conquer the entire world and all My enemies, and so to enter into the glory of My Father." For this purpose He came down upon the earth. His Sacred Heart cannot bear to see humanity, like a wild torrent, rushing into the infernal abyss, into the everlasting torments of Hell. O admirable Love of my God and my King!

"To conquer the whole world," to subject all men, all hearts, to the Sweet Yoke of poverty and humility, to the Heavenly Law of purity and charity, by the acceptance of Divine Faith and the exercise of Good Works, and even by the practice of the Counsels of Perfection, that is, by the pursuit of the highest possible Sanctity: thus to deliver them from the tyranny of their passions, from the slavery of Satan, from the imminent danger of perdition; and to render them truly happy here below, eternally blissful hereafter. What Tender Compassion of the Lord God for my miseries! and this, in spite of my former sinfulness, my black ingratitude, my foul rebellion. Adorable King, conquer also my heart, though so utterly unworthy of Thy Divine Solitude, subdue it, enslave it forever.

“And all My enemies.” What enemies are these except our own irregular inclinations, our own evil passions, which ever tend to drag us down into sin, to render us miserable? These are His enemies precisely because they are ours; they are hateful to Him because they are hurtful to us: our inordinate leanings towards earthly wealth, pleasure, and distinction, which spoil our happiness and endanger our salvation; or, in one word, the Flesh ever in league with the World and the Devil. “And so to enter into the glory of My Father.” In triumph, leading innumerable hosts of souls, all animated by His Love, all united by mutual Charity; He being the Head, and they forming His mystic Body, acquired by His passion and death; that they may share with Him unending Bliss and inconceivable Glory.

But besides, He wants our cooperation in this spiritual Warfare, in this supernatural Conquest. Here is His appeal: “Whosoever, therefore, desires to come with Me.” All are invited, but none is compelled. Our King looks for voluntary service. His kingdom is one of devotion, sacrifice, and love. But what admirable condescension to invite us to a share in this Divine Enterprise! Instead of reserving all the glory to Himself, He desires every man to have a share in it, those very men, so wretched and sinful, for whose Redemption He has conceived and undertaken this conquest of Infinite Mercy. Who, then, could refuse to listen to His Call?

And the conditions, how fair they are and how easy! “Must labor with Me.” Of course; but what an honor to labor and toil and suffer with Him, our King, our God, laboring, toiling, and suffering with us and for us; what a privilege to have part in His Afflictions, in His Cross, for the sake of our brethren,

each of whom He longs to bring under the empire of His Love! What selfishness, what meanness it would argue not to be contented with His food, His rest, His drink, His raiment, and His shelter; or to look back regretfully upon the world we have left and to sigh for its comforts and distractions, whilst giving to Christ only a half-hearted Service.

“In order that following Me in hardship, he may likewise follow Me in glory.” What liberality! Our everlasting recompense, our share in His heavenly triumph, will be exactly proportionate to our share in His labors, watches, and fatigues. Though by nature we are only His servants, and by sin have become His debtors, yet He desires to treat us as His intimate friends. No one, surely, would hesitate a moment to accept so gracious and splendid a proposal. It is true, there is the cowardly fear of our natural Self to alarm us, there are the deceitful suggestions of the Devil to discourage us; yet we know that we can do all things with the help of God, that the Martyrs have been filled with joy in the midst of their torments, and that the truest happiness has been tasted by the Saints.

Second Point. How Men Listen and Correspond to the Call of Christ, their King.

Many do not listen at all but, on the contrary, reject the Call of Christ and positively refuse to do anything for our Lord. They have either no Faith or no Works. These are Worldlings: men who, instead of accepting the gracious invitation of their Savior, follow the promptings of their passions and the deceits of Satan; men whose main object is to make money, to find amusement, and to attain prominence. They have no sense, no honor, no gratitude, and no love.

Some amongst them remain knowingly and wilfully outside the True Church, others have turned traitors and apostates. They all oppose the Kingdom of Christ by contributing to the spread of error and immorality, and not a few even go so far as to persecute His faithful followers by acts of violence and iniquitous laws. Perhaps I too have been at one time amongst these blind ingrates: for how long, for how many years? O shame and confusion, for such folly and perversity! But in any case, the ingratitude and wretchedness of Sinners and Infidels ought to fire my heart with the determination of making to Christ our Lord the continual sacrifice of my interests, my inclinations, my energies, and my whole being, in order the better to cooperate with Him for their conversion and salvation.

Many people listen to the Call of Christ, but only in so far as to keep themselves ready to carry out any particular command or obligation laid upon them by their Divine King. They make no spontaneous offer of Service. These are Ordinary Christians, who habitually strive to keep from Mortal Sin and to do what is enjoined under pain of damnation, but do not exert themselves to avoid Venial Sin. Surely, they show no generosity, manifest scarcely any zeal, and give proof of very little sense, in not availing themselves better of so advantageous and glorious an opportunity to which they are invited by Christ our Lord. Yet even these, in spite of their scanty service, provided only they persevere in Sanctifying Grace, will receive an eternal reward. Such is the Magnanimity, the Prodigality of our King. But how completely a Religious would miss the spirit of his Sublime Calling, if he were content to belong to this second class. On the contrary, the lamentable ap-

athy of so many millions of nominal Christians should only serve to spur on the true believers to greater exertion.

A large number, indeed, go further and offer their possessions and their talents for the Service of Christ. These are Practical Christians, that lead the Life of the Precepts but devote their income, their time, and their energy, to the propagation of the faith, to the relief of the poor, to the instruction of the ignorant, to the comfort of the sick and afflicted. Not satisfied with what is of obligation, they attend special exercises of worship and frequently receive the sacraments. By so doing they show their good sense, since for everything they now sacrifice they will receive a most ample compensation both here in this world and in the next; here, preservation from mortal sin and even from venial sin, with peace of soul; hereafter, endless bliss and glory in Heaven. To this third class, says St. Ignatius, all those belong who, "having the use of judgment and reason, offer their whole persons for labor." Whilst we should praise God for these good dispositions, we cannot but realize that something more is expected from a Religious.

Third Point. How a Religious should Listen and Correspond to the Call of Christ.

"But there are some," St. Ignatius says, "who wish to show greater affection and to distinguish themselves in every kind of Service of their Eternal King and Universal Lord." These are persons that possess, besides reason and judgment, a generous disposition and a loving heart, and who, in order to make the greatest possible progress in Perfection, have surrendered themselves unreservedly to the adorable Will of God. Is not this exactly what we had in

view when we conceived the idea of entering the Religious State? To show greater affection towards Him, our Creator, Who for love of us, His sinful creatures, embraced all the torments and ignominy of the Cross; to signalize ourselves in His Service, to do for Him something special and arduous in return for such wonderful Mercy; namely, to strive after real Holiness, to become entirely His. This is, surely, the spirit of our Vocation. Oh! let us resolve not only to persevere in these same desires, but daily to fan them into a more ardent flame, so that soon our hearts may be wholly consumed by the vehemence of this celestial fire. But from these generous aspirations we must proceed to energetic action.

For these, in the words of St. Ignatius, "not only offer their whole persons for labor,"—even to perform the lowliest service and the commonest drudgery,—but also begin to "act against their sensitive appetite, natural affection, and worldly love." Sensitive Appetite: the inclination to things agreeable to the senses, namely, earthly goods and pastimes; and the aversion to things painful, such as poverty and suffering. Natural Affection: the sympathy we feel for persons that please us by their beauty, kindness, or accomplishments; and the antipathy we experience for such as displease us by their looks, manners, or deficiencies. Worldly Love: the craving for liberty, independence, esteem, and honor; and the shunning of restraint, subjection, contempt, and insult. Comparatively few Christians understand this point, namely, that, since the Son of God came to conquer His enemies, our inordinate passions, they themselves should start at once, with the help of His grace, to wage war against these domestic, most dangerous, and most persistent foes, whose existence they realize consti-

tutes an immense obstacle to the carrying out of their generous desires and lofty aims. This implies more than offering one's goods and talents; this constitutes the Actual Following of Christ our King.

However, let us not forget that to belong to this class we must "act against" our rebellious inclinations, which means that we should not simply stand on the defensive by keeping them within bounds, but should take the offensive, exert ourselves in the contrary direction, do the very opposite of what they crave for, being determined to gain daily more decisive victories in this Spiritual Conflict. These, then, are Fervent Christians, such as lead, in so far as circumstances will allow, the Life of the Counsels, of Evangelical Perfection, and who sincerely devote themselves to the work of their sanctification. They realize that, before helping to extend the Kingdom of Christ over other hearts, they must first establish it firmly in their own, by complete Self-Conquest, by continual Self-Denial.

Am I too thoroughly convinced that this is my most pressing need, my most important task; namely, self-denial, self-conquest? that, without this, my activity, learning, reputation, or talent is useless and worse than useless: that all these things, far from being conducive to the Kingdom of Christ, will only prove detrimental and destructive? Not that I should ever cease begging to be wholly inflamed with zeal for souls; for the Son of God has come for this purpose, to conquer the whole world, to extend the empire of His Love over all men, over all hearts. But in order to assist Him in this Divine Enterprise and to follow Him in this Holy Campaign, I must begin with completely subduing His enemies in my own inmost soul, namely, my inordinate self-love and self-esteem.

Hence, whenever I pray "Thy kingdom come!" I should add, if not in words, at least in spirit: "Yes, Dearest Lord, Thy kingdom come, but first of all in my own heart. Oh, help me by Thy Grace to make it wholly Thine; Thine by poverty, by mortification, by humiliation; Thine by spotless purity, by unalterable meekness, by ardent charity, by perfect obedience. Teach me in all things to Conquer my Lower Self for Love of Thee."

Yet not a few go still further and enter the Religious State; that is, by the Sacred Vows they embrace the Life of Perfection. Just as some people strive to become merchants, lawyers, or doctors, and others are bent on becoming artists, statesmen, or millionaires; so these have irrevocably bound themselves to live exclusively for this one object, to become Saints. The lifelong pursuit freely chosen by Religious is their own sanctification by the constant exercise of Prayer, Penance, and Charity; by the diligent practice of Poverty, Chastity, and Obedience; and by the perfect observance of their Holy Rules. Ready to follow Christ their King even into the fiercest conflict and to display on all occasions His glorious livery, they long with deep earnestness and great confidence to bear every kind of insult, contempt, and ignominy, every kind of toil, poverty, hardship, and suffering; provided only it be for the better Service of their Lord, that is, in so far as He will deign to give them these opportunities of distinction, through the direction of Lawful Superiors or the disposal of Divine Providence. He does so to some extent every day. But shame on us, Religious reared in the cloister, if we should allow ourselves to be surpassed in zeal and generosity by Christians living in the world who were never favored with the grace of a Special Vocation.

Shame on us, if after having solemnly pledged ourselves to the closest following of Christ, our King, we should become so disloyal as to violate in any way the sacred vows made, in the presence of the whole Court of Heaven, to the Almighty and Everlasting God.

In conclusion, only One Person deserves our unlimited veneration and undivided affection; namely, the God-Man, Jesus Christ: only One Work claims our unceasing attention and unreserved devotion; namely, His Work, the salvation and sanctification of souls: and only One Means will enable us to love that Person and to embrace that Work with energy and perseverance; namely, Self-Conquest, the restraining of our rebellious passions, the mastering of our unruly senses, the renouncing of our perverse will; a continual and painful struggle, it is true, but nevertheless sweet and easy through the all-powerful grace of God.

Colloquies with my Patron Saints, my Glorious Models; with the Blessed Virgin, my Heavenly Queen; and with Christ, my Eternal King. Full of shame and sorrow, I will beg pardon for my cowardice and unfaithfulness in the past, and acknowledge myself wholly unworthy to be numbered among the members of my Institute. Then I will render the most fervent thanks for the grace of my Religious Vocation, and once more dedicate myself, body and soul, to the Service of my Divine Master, by the perfect observance of my holy Vows, Rules, and Resolutions. Realizing more clearly than ever that in my own weakness I can do nothing, but that I can do all things in Him Who is my strength, I will offer myself to be disposed of in whatever way Providence

may intimate through my Superiors; I will beg to be employed in any position, however low, hard, or isolated, for any length of time, even until death; and I will implore the favor of bearing actual want, unmerited reproof, and manifold affliction, in union with Jesus, my Adorable Lord.—At the end I will recite the Our Father.

THE RELIGIOUS STATE

The State of Perfection, also called the Religious State or the Religious Life, is constituted by a public and permanent obligation to aim at Perfection, which obligation is assumed with the taking of the Three Religious Vows. By taking the Vows of Poverty, Chastity, and Obedience, we profess before the Church that we bind ourselves to the earnest and constant pursuit of the Perfection of Divine Charity.

The Perfection of Charity after which a Religious has engaged to strive perseveringly, is not the common degree necessary to all that wish to be saved and consisting principally in the exclusion of whatever is contrary to the Habit of Charity; but it is a higher degree which consists in loving God as much as we are capable and, consequently, comprises, besides the Habit of Charity, the Removal of all Obstacles and the frequent Making of Acts.

Now, a Religious is bound to strive after this Higher Degree of Perfection by a serious obligation, which, though assumed as his profession, is nevertheless distinct from the obligation of the three Vows. For, in consequence of his engagement contracted with the Order or Institute, he cannot licitly abandon the Religious State. But he who is bound to a state, is likewise bound to what is demanded by the essence of that state. In other words, by embracing an Institute whose only reason of existence is the pursuit of the Higher Perfection of Charity, we oblige ourselves, at least implicitly, to strive with the help of grace after that same object.

The Religious State, then, is a stable manner of life led by persons who profess, by means of the Vows of Poverty, Chastity, and Obedience, to tend in the Church towards the Perfection of Charity. Voluntary Poverty uproots the concupiscence of the eyes and removes the solicitude about temporal goods. Perfect Chastity uproots the concupiscence of the flesh and removes the solicitude about wife and children. Holy Obedience uproots the pride of life—that craving for independence and superiority which might well be called the concupiscence of the mind—and removes the solicitude about the use of our freedom.

Poverty, in general, consists in the entire absence of worldly possessions. Considering it from the Religious standpoint, we usually distinguish the Vow, the Virtue, and the Spirit of Poverty.

The Vow of Poverty is an outward renunciation of earthly goods, made in accordance with the general laws of the Church and the particular constitutions of a Religious Order. The Laws of the Church have determined that the Vow of Poverty, whether simple or solemn, prevents the person who takes it from disposing freely, that is, without permission, of any material goods. The Constitutions of each Religious Order, with the previous approbation of the Sovereign Pontiff, lay down the details of this self-spoliation.

Hence it is contrary to the Vow of Poverty to take things without permission, to use things longer than allowed, to hide things that the Superior may not deprive us of them, to eat or drink without leave, through carelessness to cause what is committed to our charge or given us for our use to be damaged or

lost, to spend money received to defray traveling expenses for other purposes, to be either too liberal or too economical in the administration of temporal goods. Briefly, a Religious sins against his Vow of Poverty, when he gives, accepts, buys, sells, exchanges, lends, borrows, uses, or destroys anything, beyond the regulations approved for his Order and without the permission of his Superior.

We should note here also that a Religious breaks his Vow of Poverty whenever he transgresses the Seventh Commandment, it being immaterial whether or not his action redounds to his own personal advantage. This would happen, for instance, if as a subordinate official he were to engage laborers to do necessary and useful work for less than a living wage; or if he were to secure funds, favors, or exemptions, under false pretenses or to the detriment of third parties; or, in general, if in his business transactions he were to follow the pernicious principle that whatever is not punishable by the law of the land is permissible by the law of God.

The Virtue of Poverty consists in the inward detachment from everything earthly, in the absence of all undue affection to temporal goods. Hence, while the Vow is the means, the Virtue is the immediate end; while the Vow directly regards only the exterior act, the Virtue perfects our interior disposition. Consequently, a Religious may offend against the Virtue of Poverty without violating the Vow, but one can never violate the Vow without at the same time offending against the Virtue. The Virtue, therefore, has a far wider scope than the Vow.

It is against the Virtue of Poverty to entertain an inordinate leaning towards worldly possessions; to foster the desire for a more abundant use of earthly

goods than allowed by the Rule; to be concerned about the temporal prosperity of one's relatives; to nourish a love of conveniences, valuables, curios, or superfluities; to look for the best in things placed at the disposal of the whole Community; to give no account of money spent unless positively asked; to elicit presents from outsiders with a view to one's own satisfaction; to show displeasure if a permission is refused, or if things are not so nice, comfortable, and plentiful as one expected.

The Spirit of Poverty goes still further and reaches the acme of detachment. It enters most fully into the intention of our Blessed Lord, when He gave us this Evangelical Counsel: "Go, sell all you have, give it to the poor, and come follow Me." Accordingly it will make us love Poverty as a Mother; will enable us not only to bear patiently but even to accept eagerly whatever privations we may have to undergo in the observance of our Vow or in the practice of the Virtue; and will cause us to feel more happy the nearer we can approach our Supreme Model, Jesus Christ, Who had not even a stone on which to rest His weary head.

A Religious who has acquired the Spirit of Poverty, will on every occasion choose for himself only the least and the worst; he will cheerfully welcome the withdrawal of human favor or the loss of temporal means; he will be glad to experience the sting of actual privation or want; he will be ready to beg from door to door for the support of his community or for the maintenance of its work; in short, he will continually aspire after real abandonment in order that he may place his entire trust in the Providence of his Heavenly Father. This is that genuine Poverty which seems so repugnant to worldlings, this is

that thorough Detachment from all earthly goods of which our Divine Master has set us the Example.

Surely, on the one hand we have abundant reason to humble ourselves, seeing how little progress we have as yet made towards Perfect Poverty. On the other hand, it should be to us a constant source of joy and gratitude to realize that we truly possess nothing as our own; that the things we use with leave—our clothes, books, bed, desk, chair, and so forth,—are only lent to us and may be taken away or exchanged at any moment; that we can dispose of nothing according to our own independent choice; that every time we receive food, drink, or other necessities, we are like beggars who have to ask for alms and live on charity; in one word, that to some extent at least we have fellowship with the Son of God, Who died in the most complete destitution on the Cross. Besides, Holy Poverty will entitle us to the glorious reward promised by Him in the First Beatitude: "Blessed are the Poor in Spirit, for they shall possess the Kingdom of Heaven."

Chastity, with reference to unmarried persons, consists in the total abstinence from all carnal pleasures, in the perfect observance of the Sixth and Ninth Commandments. For the better understanding of this important matter, we should consider successively the Vow, the Virtue, and the Spirit of Chastity.

The Vow of Chastity.—Every violation of the Sixth Commandment is an offense against both the Vow and the Virtue of Chastity. But, in consequence of the Vow, the guilt of a sin against the Sixth Commandment would be augmented by the malice of a sacrilege. On the other hand, the Vow not only doubles the merit of our observance of the Virtue, but

also imparts to our Chastity the character of a Divine Consecration, which, in the case of those who have never fallen, implies the special glory of Virginity. How thankful we ought to be to our Adorable King, for having called us, in spite of our past failings, to a state of life so similar to His own and that of His Immaculate Mother, Mary. How fervently we should day after day implore the signal grace of imitating the Holy Angels. And again, how determined we should be, by every means in our power, to preserve our soul from any thought, desire, or affection that might impair this sublime gift of Purity. Even in these modern times an occasion may still arise for displaying the same heroism as animated those Saints of the age of persecution who steadfastly suffered a Cruel Martyrdom rather than forfeit their Virginal Chastity. However, if any one, during his life in the world, has had the misfortune of losing his baptismal innocence, he should not be discouraged on that account but strive to repair his loss by the generous practice of penance.

The Virtue of Chastity.—As already stated, the Virtue of Chastity coincides with the observance of the Sixth Commandment; and, with regard to this matter, nothing need be added except that a merely sensitive delight, such as may be experienced at the sight of a beautiful flower, or even a sensual pleasure, such as one might feel about the heart on meeting a dear friend, is by no means a carnal gratification. At the same time we should not forget that sensitive delight is apt to become inordinate, and that sensual pleasure may easily lead to something sinful. Hence, it will be very useful to consider here the precautions we have to take, in order that we may never sully or lose the Angelic Virtue; for, unfortunately, we are

liable to go wrong even in the cloister and at any period of our Religious profession, yea, as St. Jerome solemnly assures us, on the very threshold of death. However, this misfortune can happen only to such as wilfully neglect the powerful safeguards designed to protect this Heavenly Prerogative.

The first of these is Humility. Some Religious imagine that they are firmly established in Chastity because they do not experience any troublesome imaginations or emotions. No delusion could be more dangerous. The absence of temptation may be due to various causes, and may be nothing else than a stratagem of the devil. The sure test of Chastity is sincere Humility. Do I keep constantly before my mind, that is, do I practically realize in my thoughts, words, and actions, my own absolute nothingness, my profound sinfulness, and my unlimited capacity for evil? Or would I find on close examination, that I am still full of vanity, of self-complacency, of self-assertion, of pride? In other words, am I unremitting in the exercise of self-humiliation and self-abnegation? If so, I need not fear any temptations against Chastity; though I must, of course, avoid them with the utmost vigilance and banish them with the greatest promptitude while seeking by fervent prayer the protection of Heaven.

The next safeguard is Modesty, which constitutes the outward ornament of a virginal soul. Modesty consists in a habitual control over ourselves, over our body, our senses, our imagination, our thoughts, our words, our actions, so that as far as we are concerned they may never become a source of temptation against Purity. It regulates every motion so as to show that, whether alone or not, we are conscious of the presence of God. It causes us to refrain, outside the case

of necessity, from every touch and every glance that might stir up sensual feelings or improper emotions. It makes us resist all personal attractions, shun all tender disclosures, and abstain from all undue familiarity. It renders us particularly circumspect in our dealings with persons of the other sex, whatever be their age, condition, or office, and limits our conversations with them to what is strictly matter of business. Hence, when a Religious begins to discard the Rules of Modesty, it will not be long before he endangers his Vow of Chastity.

The third safeguard is Mortification. Without Mortification it is evidently impossible to observe Modesty or to acquire Humility. Consequently, we shall possess the Virtue of Chastity only in proportion as we cultivate the Habit of Mortification. We have to practise Exterior Mortification of the senses, not only in bearing cold and heat, hunger and thirst, fatigue and suffering, but also, as far as circumstances will permit, by inflicting bodily pain with discipline, bracelet, girdle, or haircloth. Though indispensable, this is not enough. We have, besides, to practise Interior Mortification of the mind and heart; in general, by observing silence and recollection, but in particular, by repressing improper curiosity and inordinate friendship.

The Spirit of Chastity.—Chastity, as well as Poverty and Obedience, is only a means to unite the soul to her Heavenly Spouse, by a union of love so holy, so close, so tender, that even the noblest affection found in the world is nothing but its feeble figure. The Spirit of Chastity, then, aims at perfecting this union; on the one hand, by the complete detachment from creatures, not only from every earthly possession but also from every sensible satisfaction, so that any

bodily ailment or discomfort is gladly accepted for the sake of Jesus; and, on the other hand, by the diligent practice of all the virtues, but especially of the one which stands out most prominently in the life of our Divine Lord, namely, Charity. These Supernatural Virtues constitute, as it were, the exquisite fragrance exhaled by the lily of Perfect Purity. In proportion as we advance in this Spirit of Chastity, we shall experience even while yet on earth the truth of the Sixth Beatitude: "Blessed are the Clean of Heart, for they shall see God."

Obedience, in general, consists in voluntary submission to legitimate authority. Religious Obedience denotes the loving and intelligent subjection of ourselves to the Will of God as manifested to us by the will of our Superior. Also in the matter of Obedience, we may distinguish the Vow, the Virtue, and the Spirit.

The Vow of Obedience.—This Vow is of all the most excellent, because by it a Religious consecrates to God those goods which men value most highly; namely, his liberty of action, of will, and of judgment. The obligation of the Vow of Obedience consists in this, that a Religious is bound under pain of sin to carry out the lawful orders of his Superiors. He commits a grievous sin against his Vow when he deliberately and wilfully neglects an important matter enjoined upon him by his Superior—who should but very seldom adopt this course—"in the name of Jesus Christ," or "in virtue of Holy Obedience," or in some equivalent phrase; also when he answers his Superior, who gives him an order, "I will not obey," "I refuse to do it," or similar words that express formal contempt of authority, even though the thing

commanded be unimportant; and, lastly, when his disobedience gives great scandal or causes serious inconvenience, either to the community or to outsiders. The most grievous sin that can be committed against the Vow of Obedience, is apostasy from the Order.

The Virtue of Obedience makes us conform our conduct to every direction of Superiors as well as to every point of Rule. It has for its intrinsic motive the moral beauty of our complete subjection to the Divine Will interpreted by the will of those appointed to govern us; while its extrinsic motive lies in our desire to please God and to be united with God. Religious Obedience occupies the first place among the moral virtues inasmuch as it serves to implant and foster in our soul all the others. However, the perfect acquisition of this Virtue is conditioned by the diligent and constant exercise of Faith, Hope, and Charity.

Faith makes us see the government of God in the exercise of authority by our Superiors and fills us with deep reverence and sincere affection for their persons as the duly accredited Representatives of the Most High. Owing to lack of Faith, the very foundations of human society are nowadays being shaken. Those who are swayed by the spirit of the age are inclined to see in authority only the preponderance of power, wealth, ability, or votes. Religious too are liable to become infected with these subversive notions, through newspapers, periodicals, books, and intercourse with seculars. Let us be on our guard against the subtle influence exerted by the World and daily strive to strengthen and increase our Faith. Hope assures us that, since God is infinitely Powerful, Wise, and Loving, and can never be outdone in liberality, our Superiors will rule us in everything

for our own greater good as well as for that of our neighbor. Charity unites us to God by the bond of friendship and consequently enables us to love our obligation of submitting to the Divine Will as manifested to us by our Superiors.

The Three Degrees of Obedience form the successive steps that lead up to the perfection of this Virtue. The First Degree, Obedience of Execution, consists in doing what has been enjoined promptly, without excuses or delays; exactly, not resting till the order is entirely accomplished, whether agreeable or not; and perseveringly, especially in those charges which extend over some period of time or are to be performed either at stated intervals or whenever the occasion arises.

The Second Degree, Obedience of Will, consists in submitting neither from self-interest nor through compulsion but with our whole heart; and hence it enables us to obey universally, any Superior or Official in everything that falls under his jurisdiction, not waiting for his express command but at a mere sign of his deliberate wish; joyfully, ready to continue in the same duty as long as it shall please the Superior; and lovingly, desirous to carry out the Superior's directions exactly according to his intention.

The Third Degree, Obedience of Judgment, is by far the most difficult and constitutes the crowning perfection of this Virtue. It consists in obeying supernaturally, firmly convinced that what has been ordered is, here and now, under these actual circumstances, the best for us and the most conducive to the Divine Glory; blindly, shutting our eyes, so to say, to all considerations about the mental or moral qualifications of our Superior, and likewise to whatever objections may present themselves, for instance,

that the command bears no relation to the object intended, or that we have not got the requisite strength, time, ability; and intelligently, striving to penetrate the intention of our Superior, especially in case that unforeseen difficulties or opportunities should arise.

Those Religious who energetically strive after Perfect Obedience take the very shortest and safest road to real Holiness, while at the same time they secure for themselves here on earth the fullest possible measure of peace and consolation. Just as they are wholly intent on accomplishing the Divine Will, so God, Who governs the entire universe and each individual soul with Sovereign Wisdom and Unspeakable Love, through the automatic workings of natural forces and the free agency of intelligent creatures, will guide His devoted Children infallibly to temporal happiness and eternal bliss.

The Spirit of Obedience consists in being entirely possessed and energized by the Adorable Will of God, so that in all our thoughts, words, and actions, we remain intimately united to Him by an almost ecstatic love. Such was the life of our Divine Lord, a life of Obedience. His very food was to do the Will of His Heavenly Father. And, day after day, He still continues this life of Perfect Self-Renunciation, after a mystic manner, in the Adorable Eucharist.

But how can we acquire this sublime Spirit of Obedience? By applying ourselves unceasingly first, to obey perfectly all those who are placed over us so that they may manage us as if we were a dead body or an old stick; secondly, to observe with the utmost fidelity every rule, custom, and regulation; thirdly, to practise simple and childlike openness, not only towards our Confessor in whatever pertains to our conscience, but also towards our Superior in

everything that concerns our exterior conduct. Desirous that our whole soul be intimately known to our Spiritual Father, we should sincerely manifest to him our faults, vices, and temptations, as well as our virtues, devotions, and penances. Similarly, in whatever belongs to outward discipline, we should wish to be completely ruled by our Superior and be ready to acquaint him with everything we do or say, particularly in those matters which would otherwise remain entirely hidden from him. By these means we shall eventually succeed in destroying that false love of independence so deeply rooted in every human heart, which is nothing but a subtle form of pride.

Some Superiors seem to think that their main duty consists in attending to the temporal prosperity of their Houses, and apparently give themselves little trouble about the spiritual condition of their Communities. For this they will one day have to render a severe account to Almighty God. A Religious Institute is surely not to be governed as if it were simply a close corporation, whose shareholders by means of strict economy, voluntary celibacy, and domestic discipline, manage to run schools, asylums, or hospitals, at the lowest possible figure. The first and foremost object of every Order or Congregation is to procure the salvation and perfection of its own members. This is the end, the rest is only a means. Consequently, just as subjects should avail themselves of every help afforded them by their Vocation to attain Sanctity, so Superiors are bound to use all their influence to second the Call of Christ our Lord, and to lead the souls entrusted to their care, by exhortation, guidance, and example, to the perfect observance of the Holy Rules, to the acquisition of even the most Heroic Virtue, to the Closest Union with God.

THE INCARNATION

Introductory Remarks. We now enter upon the Second Week of the Exercises. Having clearly recognized in our Religious Vocation the Personal Call of Christ, our Heavenly King, inviting us to follow Him in the conquest of souls, we are going to study for several days His Divine Example. Hence during this period of the Retreat we should keep our mind steadily occupied with the Life of our Lord down to the event which we are about to contemplate. Meanwhile we should make such use of light or darkness, of comfort or penance, as we think will be most helpful to obtain the graces we are looking for.

Subject of this Meditation.—The Three Divine Persons, as They beheld the whole earth covered with men and saw how all were falling into Hell, decreed in Their eternity that, to save the human race, the Second Person should become Man. Thus when the fulness of time had come, They sent the Angel Gabriel to the Virgin Mary to announce to her the accomplishment of the Divine Promises.

Composition of Place.—The surface of the globe inhabited by so many different nations; in particular the little oratory of our Lady at her home in the town of Nazareth.

Petition.—“An interior knowledge of our Lord, Who for me has become Man, that I may love Him more ardently and follow Him more closely.”

What St. Ignatius, in these words, directs me to pray for is evidently a very comprehensive grace. An interior knowledge is one which penetrates deep down into my soul and remains indelibly engraven on my mind. Moreover, it is a knowledge which enters into the very Heart of Christ our Lord, and realizes the desire that burns there for the redemption of the whole world and of every single man, but in particular for my sanctification and salvation.

This knowledge, then, both subjectively and objectively intimate, is to move my will not only to love Him but to love Him more, more than I have loved Him till now, while as yet I did not know Him so well, and more than others who have not such powerful reasons for loving Him, inasmuch as they have not experienced so much Tenderness and such marked Preference.

But this greater love of mine must not rest satisfied with words however sincere nor stop short at affections however ardent. It has to pass on to deeds, as did the Love of Christ, to deeds that by their difficulty and nobility will correspond in some measure, however slight, to what He, my God, has done for me, a sinful nothing. And the precise manner in which I shall have to prove the reality of my greater love arising from that more intimate knowledge of the Eternal Lord, Who for me has become Man, consists in following Him to the Conquest of all those who dwell on the surface of the earth and are rushing into Hell, by the mortification of my Sensuality and the humiliation of my Pride, by the acceptance of Poverty and Pain, by the bearing of Contempt and Insult, to whatever extent He may deign to mark me out for such distinctions.

"Observe," says St. Ignatius, "that whenever we

meditate on the Life of Christ our Lord, substantially the same three preludes are to be made, their form alone changing in accordance with the subject-matter."

First Point. What Men are without Christ, without Redemption, without Sanctifying Grace: Sinners, Atheists, Idolaters.

Their Persons: "so varied in dress and manners, some white and others black, some in peace and others in war, some weeping and others laughing, some in health and others sick, some being born and others dying."—Though so different in many respects, they all agree in this, that they are on the highroad to perdition, either because they do not believe the Teachings of Christ or because they do not observe His Commandments. Everywhere we see the same ignorance of supernatural truths, the same disregard of supernatural helps, the same absence of supernatural works, the same pampering of passion, the same greed of gold, the same thirst of applause, the same hatred of submission, the same corruption of morals. Who would not be moved to compassion at so pitiful a spectacle as the Eternal Ruin of so many millions and millions of men? For us living in the twentieth century of the Christian era, it is difficult to figure to ourselves the condition of human society as it was before the coming of Christ our Savior; the horrors of warfare, the hardships of imprisonment, the woes of slavery, the tyranny of power, the worship of vice, the shocking degradation of woman, the brutal perversity of man. The world was ruled by the demons of pride, lust, and cruelty. Even now how frightful a state of things we witness in China, India, Africa! Yet mankind was at no time entirely with-

out the Grace of Redemption. How immense, then, would have been our misery, if the Redeemer had never even been promised?

Their Words: "what people are saying, how they converse, how they swear and blaspheme."—The ordinary conversation of worldlings is likely to give us a better idea of their inward dispositions than their studied appearance and outward manners. For it is usually out of the abundance of the heart that the mouth speaks. Their favorite topics are the best opportunities of making money, the smartest styles in clothing, the latest improvements in autos, the chances of the political game, the glories of their family, the shortcomings of their neighbor, the indulgence of their passions, the defense of their rights, the avenging of their wrongs. Their daily speech is largely a tissue of flatteries and insults, of lies and slanders, of boastings and indecencies, of complaints and curses. There is not one word that bespeaks pure affection or genuine happiness, while the Name of God is at every turn abused, dishonored, and blasphemed.

Their Actions: they eat and drink, they buy and sell, they toil and travel, they quarrel and fight, they steal and squander, they marry and divorce, they seduce and murder, they die and go down to Hell.—The actions of men are but the natural outcome of the blindness of their understanding, the malice of their will, and the fury of their passions. They are exclusively occupied with earthly goods, sensual pleasures, and empty honors, while totally forgetful of their True End and their Eternal Destiny. Hence they go on breaking every Commandment and running from bad to worse, not to stop till they meet their final doom in Hell,

All this should fill my soul with Grief, Gratitude, and Humility. Grief: for these men are not only very unhappy, living as they do in the state of sin and on the brink of damnation; but by their wicked conduct they also greatly offend Almighty God, instead of praising, revering, and serving Him, and thus promoting His glory. Gratitude: for I too might have been born under sundry disadvantages, in vicious surroundings, of infidel parents, or among idolatrous savages; and what is more, the Adorable Trinity after the fall of Adam and Eve, might have abandoned the whole human race to the natural consequences of their criminal folly. Humility: for in spite of so many and such precious advantages of birth, training, and association, I lived for some time, perhaps for several years, no better than the rest, sharing in their madness and their misery. Even now, how solicitous I am for the health and comfort of my body, how conversant with the current news of the day, how intent on the childish pastimes of this earth, but how slothful in the sanctification of my soul, how negligent about the salvation of my neighbor, how indifferent towards the imperishable treasures of Heaven! Hence, how often my conversation turns on the very same topics as that of worldlings! Yet, of one bound by such solemn and so oft repeated protestations of devotion to Christ the Lord, what else could be expected than that he should be wholly engrossed with the interests of his Adorable King?

Thus the bad example set by so many of my fellow men, should only serve to reanimate my desire and to confirm my determination, henceforth to take as large a share as possible in the conquest of the world. by the generous and continual practice of Self-Denial.

Second Point. The Blessed Virgin and the Angel Gabriel.

Their Persons.—What a refreshing spectacle! How utterly different Mary had been from the rest of mankind since the first moment of her existence, through that unique privilege, her Immaculate Conception. In her we behold the most marvelous effect of sanctifying grace, the most precious fruit of Christ's redemption, the highest glory of womanhood, the perfect model for all mankind. What humility, what purity, what charity! What union with God! How lively her Faith and how holy all her Works! How poor her cell but also how peaceful! I should remember that she received this wealth of supernatural gifts also for the great benefit of other men and in particular of myself, that I might learn to imitate her as my Heavenly Queen, and might be prompted to implore her all-powerful intercession. In like manner, whatever favors I have already received or may yet obtain, are intended by God not only for my own advancement but also for the good of my neighbor. As to the Angel, he was unceasingly engaged in praising, revering, and serving the Most High. How sublime his praise, how profound his reverence, how perfect his service! Oh, that I may soon in my daily conduct become similar to this lofty Spirit! With what joy, in obedience to the Divine Behest, he descended as a messenger from Heaven to announce the coming of our Redeemer. Is this not also to be my favorite occupation, to prepare the way of the Lord?

Their Words: "what the Angel and our Lady are saying."—God's messenger reverently salutes the Virgin in these terms: "Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with thee, blessed art thou amongst women!" And Mary exclaims with the most charming ingenuous-

ness: "Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it done unto me according to thy word." I must strive to imitate the Holy Angel in repeating his salutation, by doing so with greater attention, veneration, and devótion, than heretofore. I must strive to imitate also the Blessed Virgin by generously embracing whatever my Superiors, as the messengers of Almighty God, may propose, request, or command me, for my own sanctification or for the salvation of my neighbor, even though it should entail all manner of affliction. "Behold the handmaid of the Lord." This spontaneous exclamation revealed the fundamental disposition of her Spotless Heart, her unconditional surrender to the Divine Will. No reference to unfitness, no protestation of unworthiness; nothing but a candid acknowledgment of her complete dependence on God. What admirable simplicity! Thus the terrible ruin wrought by the unbelief and disobedience of Eve, was turned into a supreme blessing by the faith and obedience of Mary.

Their Actions: "what the Angel and our Lady are doing; namely, the Angel fulfilling the functions of a heavenly legate, and our Lady humbling herself and giving thanks to the Divine Majesty."—In other words, both apply themselves with the utmost humility and fervor to their respective tasks assigned by Almighty God and in this way procure Him great satisfaction and glory. How much good we could accomplish and how much merit we could gain, if we would strictly mind our own business and give our undivided attention and energy to the performance of our duties, to the uprooting of our vices, without presuming to criticize or striving to correct what has not been committed to our charge. Let us beg leave to join the Blessed Virgin and the Holy Angel

in adoring and thanking God made Man, in that lowly dwelling at Nazareth, for the salvation of the world, for the love of every descendant of Adam. May we too by prayer, penance, humility, and charity, become fit instruments for causing Christ our Lord to be born in the hearts of sinners and unbelievers, and for bringing them thus to the unspeakable bliss of Heaven!

Third Point. The Adorable Trinity.

Their Persons. “Consider the Three Divine Persons, as on the royal throne of Their majesty They view the whole surface of the world and all nations in such blindness, and see them dying and descending into Hell.”—Yes, such wilful blindness; obstinately refusing to acknowledge God their Creator or to obey His Holy Law, and dying consequently devoid of Supernatural Faith and destitute of Good Works, they go down to Hell. Alas! I too, for a considerable time, shared in the delusion and wickedness of sinners, but while the Three Divine Persons are filled with the most tender Compassion and Mercy toward all men, I have experienced in my own preservation, conversion, and vocation, the wonderful workings of Their singular Providence and eternal Predilection. “Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost.” To Each I owe an everlasting debt of boundless praise.

Their Words. “Consider what the Three Divine Persons are saying; namely, ‘Let Us bring about the redemption of the human race, and so forth.’”—What Admirable Benignity! While They were actually being offended so grievously by this miserable and perverse race of Adam, the Ever-Blessed Trinity decided in Their eternity to accomplish its Redemp-

tion by the Incarnation of the Second Person, the Son of God and the Son of Mary. In this Adorable Decree each one of us was present to the Divine Mind, and it was out of Personal Love for every single man that the Eternal Word undertook to be born in this world, to labor, to suffer, and to die on the Cross. What return could I ever make for so much Love? Even if I were to spend every moment of my earthly existence in lowly toil, in complete destitution, in dire torment, it would be as nothing in comparison with what Christ has deigned to do for me, His faithless servant.

Their Actions. "Consider what the Three Divine Persons are doing; namely, working out the most Holy Incarnation:" the Father creating the soul of Christ by His Almighty Power, the Holy Ghost forming the body in the most pure womb of the Blessed Virgin, and the Son taking to Himself this human nature in the unity of Person.—"And the Word was made Flesh." God had become Man. O truly Infinite Condescension! He came into the world, and the world, blinded by greed and lust and pride, refused to acknowledge Him. But we, yielding to the light and power of grace, believe, adore, and love.

The Sacred Humanity, then, on coming into existence, was hypostatically united to the Eternal Word. Christ, as Man, had a most perfect intuition of the Divine Essence and consequently enjoyed the unspeakable bliss of Heaven. He was fully conscious of being constituted the Head of angels and of men, adorned with every Supernatural Virtue and God-like Gift in the very highest degree in which they can be bestowed on a human soul or a created spirit, and in such abundance that from Him Grace is derived to all mankind. He further recognized that all these

priceless favors, all this incomparable greatness, had been lavished on Him without any antecedent merit of His own, but through the pure liberality of the Adorable Trinity. On seeing Himself so wonderfully adorned, preferred, and elevated, above every other creature, and possessing a Soul preeminently noble and grateful, He could not but conceive a most ardent desire to acknowledge so many Blessings and to correspond to so much Love, by wholly immolating Himself to the Divine Will.

But as He witnessed at the same time the sad condition of the human race and of each individual on the face of the earth, and beheld the far sadder fate of the many victims of sin in Hell, He understood that this immense wealth of Heavenly Favors had been conferred on Him also for the good of His brethren exposed to such appalling dangers. And this realization enkindled in His most Generous Heart that tender sympathy for all mankind and that ardent zeal for the honor of His Eternal Father, which made Him embrace a Life full of toil and hardship, and a Death most cruel and shameful, to snatch men from the terrible power of Satan and bring them to the enjoyment of everlasting Bliss. He would start this Divine Conquest, but He would also invite other men to continue and complete it; and these His companions were to learn from Him the tactics of this Spiritual Warfare, this Warfare of Humility and Love, in order that they might likewise share in His Glorious Triumph.

Conscious that I too, in spite of my manifold unworthiness, have been called to share in the labors and sufferings of the Incarnate Son of God, I will again offer my whole self to serve in any capacity under the banner of my Heavenly King. But to translate these

dispositions into deeds, I must constantly bear in mind that the love which burns in the Sacred Heart of Jesus was from the beginning a Personal Love for me, and hence that it was truly for my sanctification and salvation, that He entered upon this Life of poverty, obscurity, labor, and suffering, which He knew would terminate in the unutterable torments and ignominy of the Cross. In return for so much Love, surely, the least I can do is to follow Him faithfully, day after day, in actual poverty, in humble toil, in thorough self-denial, in sincere charity, in perfect obedience. By thus beginning to share in His Self-Immolation, how many souls I can help to save for time and eternity! Already now I must long for my death, in whatever manner it may come and by whatever sufferings it may be preceded, as my supreme sacrifice in union with Jesus Crucified. For not until the seed fall on the earth and pass through corruption, will it produce fruit. Meanwhile, to realize more vividly my paramount obligation of imitating Christ my Savior, I cannot do better than study and invoke the Immaculate Heart of Mary, ever most intimately united to the Adorable Heart of Jesus from the first moment of the Incarnation.

Colloquy.—"At the end," says St. Ignatius, "a colloquy is to be made, thinking what I ought to say to the Three Divine Persons, or to Jesus, the Incarnate Word, or to Mary, His Mother and our Lady; making petition according to what I feel in myself in order better to follow our Lord just now become Man." I will give humble and heartfelt thanks for the immense Benefit of Redemption, the grace of baptism, the advantage of a good education, but especially for the signal favor of having been called out of the world

to share in the labors of Christ, the Son of God. I will beg for supernatural light and energy to follow Him as closely as possible in the conquest of souls, by my own sanctification, by the practice of prayer, humility, penance, charity, and obedience. For only in this manner can I become a fit instrument for the salvation of my neighbor. In conclusion, turning with the utmost confidence to the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary, I will again implore the grace of a thorough and lasting conversion; that also my heart, which has thus far been so full of selfishness and pride and so deficient in generous zeal and apostolic fervor, may become wholly intent on bearing every kind of mortification and humiliation for the spiritual benefit of my fellow men.—“Then I will say an Our Father.”

A. M. D. G.

“MY CHILD, GIVE ME YOUR HEART.”

FOURTH DAY

PATRON: St. Ignatius Loyola.

MOTTO: “Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?”

SPIRIT: Intense desire of following Christ, our Lord.

READING: Imitation; Bk. I, C. 1, 9, 11, 17, 19.

Bk. III, C. 13, 16, 17, 23, 25, 54.

Gospels; St. Luke, C. 1, 2.

Embrace your Religious Vocation with profound gratitude as a wholly unmerited favor of Christ, the Son of God, and study how you may henceforth correspond to it more faithfully and more generously.

THE HIDDEN LIFE AT NAZARETH

Introductory Remarks.—Unless we ourselves possess the solid principles that are to shape our efforts towards perfection and unflaggingly apply ourselves to the difficult task of our own sanctification, how can we dream of ever doing any good to those entrusted to our care or guidance? As a matter of fact, we shall both delude ourselves and deceive others; far from leading our neighbor to God, we shall lead him into worldliness, vanity, sensuality, sin, and perdition. The only way to benefit a single soul is the one marked out by our Divine Savior.

How is it that so many of our colleges and academies turn out so few earnest, whole-souled, and zealous Catholics? How is it that, generally, they yield so few Vocations? There must be a reason for this. Let us not put the blame where it is not. No doubt, in many cases the early home training of those children has been very deficient. Yet we ourselves also may be largely the cause of these poor results, through our lack of prayer, of humility, of mortification, of obedience, of apostolic charity. If, instead of aiming at substantial results, we are satisfied with making a show by the number of our pupils, by their smart appearance at commencement exercises or theatrical displays, by their frequent or expensive trips for the sake of athletics, by our stately buildings or sumptuous parlors, by our worldly polish or secular accomplishments, we are simply thwarting the loving designs of Christ; and the upshot will be a multitude of

half-educated men and women, without firm faith, without solid morality, without self-sacrificing devotion, people that look chiefly for wealth, amusements, and distinctions.

Let us, then, continue our Holy Retreat with great earnestness, confidence, and generosity. We entered the Religious State, not to escape from the troubles and burdens of a life in the world, but to follow Christ our Lord, to embrace His Cross, with all its labors, sufferings, and humiliations. We entered in order to save our souls at any cost, by first sanctifying ourselves with all the means at our disposal and then also becoming instrumental in the salvation of others. This Retreat will show us how to attain our purpose.

Subject of this Meditation.—After Jesus had been found on the third day in the Temple, He went down with His parents to Nazareth, and there remained subject to them, advancing in wisdom and grace with God and men.

Composition of Place.—The home of the Holy Family at Nazareth, built against the side of a hill and consisting mainly of a tortuous cave formed in the rock.

Petition.—An intimate knowledge of our Lord, Who for me led a life of Poverty, Labor, and Obedience, that I may love Him more sincerely and follow Him more faithfully.

First Point. The Poverty of Nazareth.

The earnings of a common tradesman in a small village like Nazareth must surely have afforded but a very stinted maintenance. We may be pretty cer-

tain that Joseph could barely procure the necessities of life, and that sometimes both he and those dependent on his care were in actual want. Thus Jesus, for love of me and to atone for my seeking after material comforts and sensible gratifications, wished to suffer the sting and the reproach of Poverty. For, of course, the son of a poor carpenter was looked down on and despised by other people that were better off. Yet what serenity, what peace, what happiness, in this modest little home! How gladly and generously Mary and Joseph shared in the voluntary Poverty of Jesus. Every one that wants to live on intimate terms with Jesus must strive to become truly poor.

What is my practical regard and love for Poverty? Do I esteem and cherish the poor more than the rich, inasmuch as Jesus forsook riches to embrace Poverty? Do I at least receive and treat poor people with the same deference as I would wealthy persons? Do I love the accompaniments of Poverty, shabby clothes, old shoes, a hard bed, a bare room, simple or even somewhat scanty food? Do I take care to rid myself of all superfluous articles, of everything that is not strictly necessary? Do I rejoice in being made to experience at times some of the effects of Poverty; hunger and thirst, cold and heat, inconvenience and privation; that thus I may become more like to my Lord and Savior, Who suffered all these things for my sake and on my account? Am I ready to solicit alms, even to beg from door to door, after the bright example of the Saints,—Francis of Assisi, Ignatius Loyola, Benedict Labre? Do I at least avail myself gladly of every opportunity to appear poor, by humbly asking my Superior for the necessary apparel, stationery, carfare, and so forth? Am I delighted to get a taste of real want, in finding

myself deprived of human aid or my Community involved in pecuniary difficulty, that thus I may practise sweet and firm reliance on the Providence of our Heavenly Father, Who feeds even the birds of the air and clothes the flowers of the field?

But to return to the Holy Family at Nazareth, how remarkably bright and tidy was everything about that humble dwelling, in spite of their limited resources! So every Religious House, in spite of its Poverty, should be conspicuous for its order and neatness. Each inmate should do his share to preserve and promote cleanliness. A slovenly Religious is a burden to a poor Community, a disgrace to his holy Profession, and a scandal both to his companions and to seculars. Apart from exceptional circumstances, how can any one pretend to keep his soul free from sin, if he cannot even keep his room free from dust and disorder, or his habit free from spots and stains?

Again the home of the Holy Family was not devoid of some simple ornaments, but how unworldly they were, how apt to raise the mind to Heaven. Sometimes, through misplaced amateurism or through sheer thoughtlessness, there may be found in Religious Houses paintings or pictures that one would hardly expect to see in the home of an ordinary Catholic. If they are really valuable works of art, they had better be sold; if not, they should be burned. The few articles with which Poverty permits us to adorn the walls of our rooms and corridors should be remarkable for their simplicity and breathe nothing but the purest devotion.

Poor people usually lead a very obscure existence, and so it was with our Divine Lord. Jesus remained hidden in that lowly home at Nazareth from His return out of Egypt till the opening of His ministry.

He Whose birth had been so eagerly expected ever since the fall of Adam, and Whose advent had been heralded by a long line of prophets, and Who at last had come to convert mankind by the Preaching of the Gospel, thus spent by far the greater portion of His life in complete Obscurity. How foolish, then, must it be to make so much of whatever brings us before the public. Do I love to remain hidden, do I really seek to be ignored, do I aspire to be employed in the humblest office and the commonest work? Do I rejoice at being set aside to make room for others, or at getting to be considered as of little use to the Community? These trials will come sooner or later for most of us, until, with increasing years, we are definitively laid on the shelf. Oh! what a shame for me to be still dreaming of some place of authority or some position of influence. How unlike my Savior and my God!

But while I feel yet full of health and energy, I should not go about my occupations in such a manner as to remind everybody of my presence. Precipitation, hurry, and commotion, characterize the promptings of Nature, whereas the workings of Grace are marked by reflection, self-control, and quiet. I may apply this test to my thoughts, my words, my actions, my correspondence, and even to my resolutions. What is done hastily, is in most cases badly done. And since our Lord, the Incarnate Wisdom, sought Obscurity and Oblivion, why should I strain to make a little show and noise in this world?

Second Point. The Labor of Nazareth.

Jesus was truly in Labor from the days of His childhood, according to the scriptural prophecies. First He helped His Holy Mother, then He assisted

also His beloved Foster-Father, and later on He Himself exercised the trade of a carpenter. Why? To teach us the dignity, the necessity, and the value of Labor. Labor, indeed, in so far as it means activity, is honorable and ennobling; since God Himself is perfect and substantial Activity. But in so far as it means fatigue, it is a penalty, a penance, imposed on Adam and on all his children. "In the sweat of your brow, you shall eat your bread." Jesus, by His toil set us the example of submission to this Divine Sentence, pronounced, not against Him, but against our First Parents for their disobedience, and merited no less by ourselves on account of our own transgressions. It was to atone for my sins, in particular, that He suffered, during so many years, the inconvenience, hardship, and weariness attached to earthly Labor.

Besides, our Lord wished to animate us to constant toil, because it is a potent means to subdue the animal body and its unruly passions. Just as the pleasurable cultivation of the Garden of Eden would have hindered Adam from falling into that disgrace which covered him with confusion at the voice of God, so the penitential exertion to which he was henceforth subjected, was intended to enable him to rise from his woeful degradation. Since man had refused allegiance to his Maker, the earth had rebelled against its master, and since the soul had aspired to be like the Lord of Glory, the body had striven to enslave her spiritual faculties to its brutal instincts. But the penalty for all this disorder would also prove its remedy. By Labor, the earth was again to be made subservient to man, the body to be subjected to the mind, and the soul to be rendered acceptable to the Most High.

Thus Labor,—and consequently also fatigue, weariness, exhaustion,—if borne generously, besides being a powerful help to Humility and an excellent instrument of Penance, is the great preservative of Purity. To indulge in sleep or rest more than is demanded by nature, exposes the soul to very dangerous temptations. Let us bear this in mind also when we have to do with lazy children or indolent students. They are necessarily proud and sensual and bad, because they discard the God-given means to correct themselves. Labor, however, is not any recreative pastime or self-chosen occupation, lounging, talking, reading, playing, sightseeing, or visiting; but exertion of mind and body, imposed or sanctioned by Holy Obedience. All else, for us Religious, is idleness.

But it was not enough for Jesus to devote Himself to Labor. No; He chose, besides, manual and menial Labor, such as is required in the care of a poor household and the trade of a common artisan. Sometimes we are inclined to think little of our employment, because it offers no variety or requires no head-work. Let us correct these unreasonable, unchristian, irreligious views, by considering the example set us by our Divine Lord, and let us resolve, for His love and reverence, to shun what would lift us up and to seek what will keep us down. No labor, however lowly, can prove monotonous when it is prompted by affection. Yet, particularly, as a village carpenter, the lot of Jesus must have been humble indeed. We can easily fancy how He would often be received rudely, commanded imperiously, or criticized unjustly. But oh, how joyfully He anticipated such humiliations and how His Sacred Heart relished the consequent confusion! With what meekness He would listen to the insulting remarks of His towns-

people, with what patience He would endeavor to satisfy their extravagant demands! All this to confound my self-conceit, to rebuke my self-will, to uproot my pride, to convert my heart. What has been my conduct in somewhat similar trials?

How does Jesus Labor? With what purity of intention, with what recollection of demeanor, and with what application to details! And while His hands are thus busily engaged, where are His thoughts, where is His Heart? My thoughts are habitually wandering from one useless subject to another; and my heart is commonly engrossed with some pet creature, some trifling hobby, some worldly news, or some fanciful project. But His thoughts are constantly dwelling on the things of Heaven, the glory of His Father, the salvation of His brethren; while His Sacred Heart is completely absorbed in Prayer and in Love. I must strive to behold and watch my Savior at His Daily Toil; I must learn from Him how to sanctify myself in my various occupations.

Third Point. The Obedience of Jesus at Nazareth.

Who Obeyed? The Incarnate Word, the Wisdom of the Father, the Almighty Creator, the Eternal Lord. By His voluntary subjection at Nazareth, Jesus condemned that restless spirit of independence and superiority which nowadays destroys the peace of so many homes and brings down to perdition such multitudes of souls. Seeing how the Son of God was content to occupy the lowest place in the Holy Family, should not a sinner such as I, who profess to be His Companion, rejoice in being ranked officially beneath everybody else? And since He deemed it expedient and necessary to obey, how futile must be my

pretexts, how senseless my repugnance that hinders me from yielding Perfect Obedience? Of all things this is the one I must realize most thoroughly, namely the value of Obedience as the practical acknowledgment of Divine Authority, and hence the necessity of steadily advancing in this virtue, so as to reproduce in my daily actions the Wonderful Example of Jesus Christ.

How did He Obey? Our Savior was subject in all things without exception, though He understood what was needed incomparably better than those who commanded. Everybody admired the readiness, docility, and thoroughness with which the Holy Child would do whatever He was told. For both Mary and Joseph this heavenly spectacle was a continual incentive to humility as well as an abundant source of consolation. I too will often contemplate this Divine Obedience, so prompt and exact in Execution, so joyful and loving in Will, so blind and intelligent in Judgment; and after reflecting on my own Obedience, I will with shame and sorrow acknowledge my many deficiencies and earnestly implore greater fidelity in imitating my Adorable Lord.

Whom did Jesus Obey? His Parents, His own creatures. What an immense distance between the superior and the subject! the superior a mere man, the subject Almighty God. Yet Mary and Joseph, as well as the religious and civil magistrates, were for Jesus the Official Representatives of His Eternal Father. That was enough for Him to show them profound Reverence, loving Submission, and unhesitating Obedience. Who are in my regard the Special Representatives of the Most High? Am I impressed chiefly by the good or bad qualities I notice in them, inasmuch as they are weak and fallible men; or am

I guided solely by Supernatural Faith, acknowledging in them the Interpreters of the Divine Will and the Vicegerents of the Supreme Majesty?

It was particularly by the practice of perfect Obedience that Jesus caused His light to shine in the narrow circle assigned Him by the Providence of His Eternal Father. As our Lord grew up, He advanced in wisdom and in grace, before God and men. Living at Nazareth, in obscurity and subjection, He daily grew in divine favor and increased in heavenly merit. Can anything like this be said of me? Does my light—my poverty, my detachment, my humility, my recollection, my gentleness, my cheerfulness, my industry, my obedience,—shine forth in the Community of which I am such an unworthy member? Have I too, with increasing years, grown in true Wisdom and heavenly Grace before my companions, my pupils, my acquaintances? Or as to Wisdom have I, on the contrary, not become somewhat inflated with my wider business-experience or greater book-learning? And as to Grace have I, perhaps, not grown remiss in my earlier fervor of spirit, in my former eagerness for mortification and humiliation, in the generous imitation of Christ my King? In other words, am I gradually getting more united to God or rather more taken up with earth? But the means of Holiness are still within my reach. The only thing needed is the will to use them with energy and perseverance.

Colloquies.—Since it was for me, in particular, that Jesus led this life of Poverty, Labor, and Obedience with what confidence ought I not to beseech Him, through the intercession of the Blessed Virgin and His holy Foster-Father, for a deep and ardent love of actual privation, humble toil, and complete subjec-

tion? How earnestly I should entreat Mary and Joseph, that, as they daily derived such immense profit from the Divine Example which they had constantly before their eyes, so they may obtain for me the grace of ever keeping before my mind and earnestly pondering in my heart, the Perfect Virtues of Jesus, my Savior and my God, toiling for me at Nazareth. Above all, I must pray that, by the steady and loving imitation of my Adorable Master, I may daily grow in sanctifying grace and supernatural wisdom, not merely in the estimate of my companions and acquaintances, but especially in the sight of the Saints and Angels, of my Heavenly Mother Mary, and of Christ, my Sovereign Lord.—Our Father.

THE STAY IN THE TEMPLE

Introductory Remarks.—The life of a fervent Religious may be summed up in two words: mortification and prayer. Through the continual practice of mortification our hearts are detached from creatures; through the constant exercise of prayer our souls are united to God. Evidently mortification and prayer are inseparable and interdependent. If we do not pray we cannot be mortified and if we are not mortified we cannot pray. Again, just as our prayer should not be restricted to a few set occasions but ought to pervade our whole existence, so our mortification should not be limited to some external objects but ought to penetrate to our very heart-strings. Of this complete detachment from everything created and of this perfect union with the Sovereign Creator, Christ our Redeemer deigned to set us a most striking example as soon as He had reached the age of legal maturity.

Subject of this Meditation.—Jesus being twelve years old, the Holy Family went up to Jerusalem according to the custom of the feast. When the days were completed, Mary and Joseph set out on their home journey, while Jesus remained in Jerusalem without their knowledge. They missed Him at night-fall, looked for Him in vain among their kinsfolk and acquaintance, but found Him on the third day in the Temple.

Composition of Place.—The road from Nazareth to Jerusalem, the narrow streets of the Holy City, the Temple.

Petition.—An intimate knowledge of my Lord, Who for me made the sacrifice of His tenderest affections,—for my instruction by His example, for my comfort by His affliction, for my pardon by His merit,—when He remained in the Temple without informing His parents; in order that I may love Him more fervently and follow Him more courageously.

First Point. The Journey of the Holy Family to Jerusalem.

They went, says St. Luke, according to custom, that is, in compliance with the law of Moses; but they certainly did not go merely through custom. To do things according to custom, means for us Religious, to do them according to the letter of our Rule and the spirit of our Institute, and hence to seek in them always fresh occasions for practising humility, mortification, and charity. But to do things merely through custom, means either to do them mechanically because one has got into a way of doing them through some imperative necessity, or else to do them passionately because one has become strongly attached to them through some selfish motive, some natural aptitude. How do I perform my Spiritual Duties, according to custom or merely through custom? How do I discharge my other occupations, thoughtfully and religiously, or mechanically and passionately?

Let us also consider that it was quite a journey in those days to go from Nazareth to Jerusalem; particularly for poor people it meant a great deal of fatigue,

hardship, and even danger. Yet Jesus, Mary, and Joseph undertook it joyfully, knowing how many special graces God is wont to bestow under such circumstances. How easy, on the contrary, it is for us Religious, to go to our chapel or our church, where we find not merely some manifestation of the Majesty of the Most High but the very Person of the Word made Flesh. Do I adore Him there as often as the accomplishment of His Holy Will allows me? Again, am I practically convinced of the paramount importance, the priceless advantages of my Spiritual Duties? When I have a pretext to defer them or to shorten them, am I not too ready to avail myself of it? and do I not sometimes sacrifice them entirely to what is far less urgent? Nothing can wait, nothing can be put off, except our examens, our beads, our visits to the Blessed Sacrament. It is true that we may at times have to forego our prayers for the sake of charity or obedience, but in a well-regulated Community this happens rarely and not without an opportunity of repairing our loss.

It was, we may suppose, during this journey that Jesus decided on leaving His Parents by staying back in the Temple without their knowledge. It is particularly in the observance of silence and the exercise of prayer, that we can learn to correspond to the manifold graces of Heaven, to yield to the ceaseless attractions of the Holy Spirit, to follow the powerful impulses of Divine Love towards self-sacrifice. In other words, it is only when we keep recollected that we can at all expect to hear the voice of our Adorable Master calling us to greater exertion and loftier perfection. Hence the diligent practice of the Presence of God is indispensable for our sanctification.

I may in spirit accompany the Holy Family on this

journey, following a little in the rear as their menial servant. With what genuine and charming recollection they proceed on their way, either absorbed in silent prayer or else chanting alternately some appropriate psalms; except at certain intervals, when Joseph reopens the conversation with a joyous "Alleluia," "Praise the Lord." Hence, what Union with God, what peace of soul, what Perfection of Charity! How each one strives to profit by the beautiful example of the others, and how each is to the others an inspiring model! What gentleness, what gravity, what patience!

But now they are going to make a short halt. I will approach Saint Joseph and ask him whether I may fetch some water to wash the dust off their feet, or may care for the ass which carries a couple of bundles containing some necessary articles. Meanwhile I hear Joseph give directions to Jesus about gathering some dry grass, and also to Mary who wishes to know where he would like them to take their little repast. And I see how Mary and Jesus obey, so promptly, so exactly, so lovingly. Then they bring out their provisions; they are scanty and simple, the bread is pretty hard and the cheese looks stale. But how devoutly they say grace, not as a mere formula recited carelessly through routine, but as a real and earnest prayer coming from their inmost hearts. I notice how the Blessed Virgin strives to serve Saint Joseph and even Jesus with the better portion, and how the Holy Child begs His dear Mother to take it herself, since for Him the crusty part will do just as well. And how modest they are in all their looks and movements, though evidently their little meal is thoroughly seasoned with hunger. How careful also, almost scrupulous some one might

think, not to waste anything! But they are poor people, and they realize it, and they are glad to be so. What heavenly joy is all the while mirrored in their saintly countenances! And how delightful their conversation, about the coming festivity, the sacred buildings, and the sacerdotal city! How eagerly and respectfully Jesus is asking questions, and with what docility and attention He listens to their answers.

Second Point. Jesus Remains Behind in the Temple.

I may now accompany the Holy Family right up to the Temple. That is their place of rest; for they are spiritual persons, and their souls are able to pray in spite of the weariness of their bodies. On the contrary, my soul, is so truly imprisoned in this corruptible body, that the least physical indisposition interferes with mental application, especially with Prayer and Meditation. But it shall be so no more. In imitation of the Divine Child and His holy Parents, I must strive to overcome myself, I must discard the complaints of the flesh, and if necessary, I must force it into submission. Besides, on reaching a destination or stopping in a town, my first and foremost care shall be to visit the church or chapel and adore God our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament.

But let me contemplate the Holy Family during the religious functions in the Temple. Saint Joseph is with the men in the inner court of the Israelites, the Blessed Virgin is with other women from Galilee in the court facing the temple, while Jesus is in one of the porticos of the outer court amid a group of boys of his own age, under the supervision of a levite. I may note particularly the deep reverence manifested

in their outward bearing and I may relish their inward devotion, the faith, the confidence, and the love that fill their hearts. What they implore most earnestly from God, is light to know His Adorable Will and strength to accomplish it perfectly. I will presume to join them and offer my petitions in union with theirs. Here, in their company, I must learn to Pray. For without the habit of Prayer, without constant and ardent Prayer, in meditation and mass and communion and examens and beads and office and throughout the day, there is no Detachment from creatures, and without Detachment from creatures there is no Following of Christ, no Conquest of Souls.

But Jesus has abandoned Himself entirely to the Holy Spirit. I must strive to understand what passes in His Sacred Heart; for though Divine inasmuch as it belongs to the Person of the Eternal Word, it is also Human, full of sympathetic love and tender solicitude for His earthly Parents. Not to feel being separated from those near and dear to us is, indeed, no sign of holiness. But the affection of Jesus for both Mary and Joseph is incomparably more deep and ardent than any other child of His age can ever cherish for its father and mother; and if He has decided on leaving them for a few days, let us be convinced that it is not through any coldness or indifference. On the contrary, His gentle soul is racked with pain, His Loving Heart is crushed with anguish, at the prospect of the separation. But He knows how to sacrifice His purest feelings to the Will of His Heavenly Father, to the glory of the Adorable Trinity. And though Mary and Joseph are the holiest persons that ever lived, though they would never put the slightest obstacle to His Work, yet He is resolved to abandon them as soon as the appointed hour

strikes. How much more reason I have to tear myself loose from any creature towards which I begin to feel an undue inclination or attraction and, particularly, to conquer my affection for anybody, whose company or conversation proves detrimental to my spiritual welfare. Evidently, I ought to be no less generous and resolute in overcoming any repugnance or aversion that threatens to hamper my union with God. In short, I must set no limit whatever to my practice of interior mortification.

Jesus, however, not only suffers intensely because He is to be deprived of the company of His beloved Mother and cherished Foster-Father, but He is still more distressed because of their own bereavement and desolation. For He knows and realizes all the pain He is going to cause them by this unexpected separation; He foresees their restless anxiety, their heart-breaking sadness, their ceaseless tears. Yet even this fact cannot alter His decision. One word of explanation would have been enough to render the sacrifice almost painless, but that word could not be spoken. When God deigns to manifest to us His Adorable Will or merely His Good Pleasure, we ought to obey Him without delay or hesitancy, in spite of the sorrow and affliction we may thus bring on those whom we hold dear. We must remember that our obligations to Him surpass immeasurably whatever we may owe to any other being. Our affection for persons, however good they may be, ought always to retain its supernatural purity and nobility; it must never degenerate into merely natural sentiment. On certain occasions we may have even to set aside every human consideration and cut asunder every tie of kindred or friendship, for the sake of the Heavenly Kingdom. It may be either wicked persecution driv-

ing us into exile or Holy Obedience assigning us to a distant post. In all such cases let this be our consolation, that our sacrifice will turn to the great benefit not only of ourselves, but also of the very persons whom we forsake at the Voice of God.

On the other hand, let us be convinced that by entertaining, or rather by not extirpating, an inordinate attachment, we shall not only inflict great harm on ourselves, but also cause spiritual injury to others. Many a budding vocation to the Religious Life has thus been choked by unmanly softness and sentimental indulgence, by indiscreet praise and silly flattery. When we notice that a child has been especially favored by God, let us strive to awaken and foster in that soul the spirit of gratitude, humility, and self-denial. But if instead we rouse and feed its sensuality, its worldliness, or its vanity; far from seconding the work of Grace, as we intended, we run a great risk of strengthening the power of Evil. A most lamentable and baneful error, which can be avoided only by such as labor constantly at curing the corruption of their own heart, by such as mortify unsparingly every desire not conformable to the Adorable Will of God.

The lesson, therefore, I have to learn from this heroic conduct of Jesus my Lord, and the grace I have to implore from Him in this meditation, is that of an entire Detachment from all objects, places, offices, and especially persons, in order to be like to Him, to Mary, and to Joseph; a Detachment so thorough as to enable me to bear at any time the complete spoliation of things created, also of spiritual friendships and supernatural consolations, not only with patient resignation but even with genuine joy. In the light of the glorious example given me by Jesus Christ, my

most Loving Savior, I must examine myself carefully on this perfect Detachment from all creatures, I must search my heart and discover those inordinate tendencies of sympathy or antipathy, of attraction or repugnance, of anticipation or apprehension, of elation and depression, which up to this have prevented me from giving myself to God and making progress in Perfection. Unless I strive to find them out and resolve to root them up, this present Retreat will prove just as barren of lasting results as any previous one.

However, there is yet another matter that deserves our attention. If Jesus was so painfully affected by the leaving of His most holy Parents, without any fault or imperfection on their part; who can tell what agony His Sacred Heart experienced at the thought of so many a Soul enriched with Sanctifying Grace, so many a Religious favored with signal privileges, wilfully separating from Him by inordination and sin! Am I not, perhaps, of the number of these ingrates? What, then, am I going to do in order to atone for my past ingratitude and to console my Sorrowing Lord?

Third Point. The Finding of Jesus in the Temple.

Mary and Joseph seek the Divine Child during three days.—What a sharp pang pierced their souls when they first discovered their loss on the homeward journey. They were utterly unable either to explain the absence of their beloved Jesus or to find a clue to His actual whereabouts. I will endeavor to realize their apprehension and their grief, as without taking even a drop of water to refresh themselves they at once retraced their steps to the Holy City. I will follow them in their long and fruitless search along the crowded thoroughfares and through the

crooked alleys of Jerusalem. Unmindful of hunger, thirst, and weariness, they were only intent on ascertaining what had become of their Adorable Jesus. Yet what predominated in their souls was profound humility and loving conformity to the Divine Will. They too offered to God the sacrifice of even their noblest affections, and it was in this way that the absence of Jesus contributed to their progress in Perfection. Who, indeed, could measure the tenderness and ardor of their love for Jesus, the All-Beautiful, or express the intensity and fulness of their happiness in His heavenly company! But it is precisely this immolation of our heart, from the motive of Charity, or at the word of Obedience, or in the disposal of Providence, which is sure to draw down upon us the most abundant graces.

Mary and Joseph find Jesus in the Temple.—They had sought Him in vain among their friends and relatives; but they found Him finally, when all further search seemed hopeless, in the Sanctuary of the Lord. If we renounce for God our earthly feelings, if we sacrifice to Him our natural affections, we shall find the aspirations of our heart chastened, strengthened, and satisfied, often already in the Religious Cloister, but unfailingly in the Heavenly Jerusalem. And in proportion to the generosity of our Detachment, shall we be compensated with a tenfold, a thirtyfold, and even a hundredfold, by the sweetness of fraternal charity. More than this, Jesus Himself will deign to become our Eternal Spouse; and even while yet on earth our soul will enjoy His intimate familiarity in the midst of the most painful trials.

Let me also reflect, however, that while Mary and Joseph sought the Holy Child so sorrowfully and perseveringly I, after losing His sweet intercourse

through my own fault, remained not seldom for days and weeks, perhaps even for months and years, without recognizing my misfortune and my guilt, without taking a single step to recover His former friendship and gladsome presence. Oh! how I ought to be overwhelmed with shame and grief at the recollection of so senseless, so heartless, so inhuman a conduct. For the future, whenever I perceive that I have been in any way unfaithful to my Adorable Lord, or that my soul is no longer favored with His intimate communications, I will seek Him by humble prayer and fervent penance, until I possess Him again as my only Beloved.

Mary humbly and affectionately remonstrates with Jesus, and receives a most loving and satisfactory reply.—“My son,” said the Blessed Virgin, “why have You done so to us? Behold, Your father and I have sought You sorrowing.” These words betray the greatness of her love and the intensity of her affection. But Jesus answered: “Why did you seek Me? Did you not know that I must be about my Father’s business?” This reply was dictated by His ardent zeal for the glory of God, His tender affection for His Parents, and His prudent reserve towards the doctors of the Law. “I acted thus in order to do the work given Me by My Heavenly Father, and you knew that I could not be engaged in anything else than the accomplishment of His Adorable Will. You had not lost Me through any fault of yours. Why, then, did you seek Me? It was only because of your great love and burning solicitude.”

Oh, how earnestly I should take to heart these first words recorded from the lips of my Divine Savior, and how powerfully they ought to spur me on to purify my heart from every selfish attachment or re-

pugnance and to regulate my entire conduct in accordance with His sublime example! Am I too always about the business of my Heavenly Father, in union with Jesus, Mary, and Joseph? Is my heart like theirs ever animated by an ardent longing to promote the divine glory? Or do I still use my time independently of Obedience, just according as I feel impelled by my own likes and dislikes, by my natural indolence or restlessness? And what about the principal task which God has given me to do in this world, my own sanctification, through the faithful observance of my Religious Vows and Holy Rules? Can I say in truth that I am constantly applying myself to this all-important work?

Colloquies with Saint Joseph, the Blessed Virgin, and the Child Jesus; beseeching each in turn for some share in those heroic virtues which they exercised during their visit to Jerusalem. I will ask in particular that, through the continual practice of Prayer and Mortification, my heart may become like to theirs, thoroughly disengaged from all earthly interests, completely engrossed with the things of heaven, solely intent on the fulfilment of the Divine Will, and intimately united to the Sovereign Good.—Our Father.

THE MOTIVES OF HUMILITY

Humility is that virtue which, by the loving acknowledgment of our utter vileness as contrasted with God's Sovereign Excellence, checks our false, disorderly self-esteem, and fosters our true, orderly self-contempt. Unfortunately, we are all blinded and hardened by pride. This is one of the worst effects of original and actual sin, a spiritual disease almost identical with our very nature. The most obvious remedy is to consider attentively and prayerfully what we are of ourselves, what we made ourselves, and what we ought to become for the love of Christ our Lord; in other words, to meditate on the Motives of Humility, our Nothingness, our Sinfulness, and our Vocation. While the first and second considerations serve chiefly to enlighten our mind, the third consideration aims principally at moving our will. For, though we should be fully convinced of our own unlimited baseness, yet as long as we do not cherish this conviction in our inmost heart nor strive to express it in every detail of our conduct, we have not reached even the lowest degree of the virtue of Humility.

First Motive of Humility. Of myself, I am a mere Nothing.

God, of Himself, is Infinite Being and Perfect Activity, Pure Intelligence and Essential Love. What am I, of myself? I did not make myself; I was made. Of what? Of nothing. Nothing is the direct and

absolute negation of all being. A blade of grass is something, a speck of dust is something; but I, of myself, am less than either, less than the most infinitesimal atom; I am nothing. Without God, I am the most beggarly of all beggars, the most helpless of all weaklings, the most wretched of all unfortunates; no, I am immeasurably less; I am nothing. Whatever good I possess, natural or supernatural, is not mine but God's. Hence St. Paul declares that, "If any man think himself to be something, whereas he is nothing, he deceives himself." Likewise, whatever power, wisdom, or goodness I notice in any of the various beings round about me, comes all from God, is all God's.

On the other hand, whatever is defective, whether in myself or in others, reminds me in loud and unmistakable accents of my own utter nothingness. For what is a defect save the absence of some requisite being or some necessary quality, an approach to nothingness? Thus, whatever is poorly planned or clumsily arranged, recalls to me that absolute void or intelligence which is my own. Whatever is bad or hurtful, speaks to me of that thorough lack of goodness which is my own. Whatever is faulty or sinful reminds me of that unlimited capacity for evil which is my own. I cannot esteem what is defective, wrong, injurious; hence, if I wish to be consistent and just and truthful, I am not to value myself nor to be pleased with myself nor to make of myself any account at all.

Am I, then, to despise myself? No, at least not inasmuch as I am only nothing. As such, I need not seek contempt but may rest satisfied with being completely ignored. But if I want to be esteemed and honored, or rather if I am not willing to be treated

as perfectly good-for-nothing, I certainly do not seek the truth, I cherish falsehood, I am not walking in the light of God, I am not animated by the love of God. Being, consequently, abandoned to my own nothingness, I must needs be miserable. On the contrary, what happiness to recognize that God is to us everything, and that He is worthy of our most profound adoration and our most devoted service! What consolation to see ourselves so utterly destitute of goodness that we are compelled, as it were, to place our entire confidence in God, to rely completely on Him, the Source of every blessing! The humble man alone can say from his heart: "My God and my All! I rejoice that Thou art infinitely Mighty, Wise, Good, Just, and Perfect; that Thou only art the most Holy, most High Lord. Thou art my All, and I, Thy creature, am wholly Thine, Thine by nature and Thine by love!"

This, then, I should constantly keep before my mind and strive to realize more fully every day; namely, that of myself I am nothing; that for me it is the most natural thing to blunder and to fail; that there is no depth of iniquity to which I may not descend; that if I understand any truth it is by God's light, if I possess any talent it is by God's gift, if I accomplish any good it is by God's grace. As long as I am in this mental attitude—which is the only correct one for any man and the only possible one for an honest person—how could I be scandalized at the words or actions of others? If they are really committing some wrong, they are simply doing what is natural to them and natural to me. If God were not to sustain me continually, at this very moment, I should commit faults far more serious, sins far more shameful, crimes far more detestable. Besides, what

do I know about their circumstances or their intentions? With an understanding so limited and so darkened as mine, how can I usurp the office of judge, reserved exclusively to God?

Let us, therefore, never condemn any man, never think harshly of any man, never look down on any man. Whether he be a bad Catholic or a bitter Protestant or a benighted Infidel, let us always have a kind word for him and bear him a compassionate heart. How many of them, with only a small fraction of the graces heaped upon us, would have turned out good and holy! Just as some persons have received a larger share of wealth, learning, or energy, that they may become the open channels of such temporal benefits for their fellow men; so others have been blessed with a greater abundance of spiritual favors, that they may freely communicate these higher gifts to their less privileged brethren. To use one's talents in any other way is nothing but ill-disguised self-idolatry.

Again, if I honestly recognize my own numberless shortcomings and sincerely desire not to be esteemed except for God's blessings, what difficulty can I find in having recourse to those appointed for my guidance on the road to Perfection and in laying open my heart as it really is: my being taken up so deeply with the concerns of earth and so slightly with the interests of heaven; the many distractions I entertain in prayer; the scanty profit I derive from the sacraments; my uncharitableness, my impatience, my self-complacency, my self-indulgence; my violations of rule; my neglect of duty; my general lack of holy enthusiasm and ardent zeal? Even if this spontaneous disclosure were only meant to furnish us with a spur to self-examination and a lever for self-humiliation,

it ought to be diligently practised by every sincere Religious, or rather by every sensible Christian.

There is probably no point of monastic tradition more warmly recommended by the Saints and more intensely hated by the Devil than manifestation of conscience, especially if made, not from the need of getting our sins forgiven in the Tribunal of Penance, but from the desire of securing safe guidance on the Road of Perfection. This practice, so helpful to our progress in holiness and so indispensable to the acquisition of humility, should not be discontinued after the completion of our noviceship, but be faithfully adhered to till the very end of our life. Let us not permit ourselves to be deluded by the Spirit of darkness and pride. Superiors have a positive right to know whatever pertains to our exterior behavior; and, hence, subjects are in conscience bound to answer truthfully whenever they are questioned about such matters. But to advance more rapidly in humility, we should of our own accord manifest to our lawful Superior our outward failings and shortcomings, while to our spiritual Director we should lay bare not only our exterior faults but also whatever belongs to the interior life of our soul.

Second Motive of Humility. I Made Myself a Sinner.

Were I only nothing of myself, I might rest contented with being utterly ignored. But the fact is, I am less and worse than nothing, inasmuch as I made myself a sinner. For this means that I repaid God's incomprehensible bounty with the blackest ingratitude and the vilest treason. It means that I preferred a mere creature, another nothing like myself, to Him, the Infinite Goodness, Wisdom, and

Power. It means that I committed against Him a most heinous outrage in His immediate presence—much more immediate than the mutual presence of men—in the presence of so Mighty a Creator, so Holy a God, so Loving a Father. It means, moreover, that I abused His incomparable liberality by turning His own gifts against Him, my Sovereign Benefactor and Lord. It means, in short, that I am the greatest of maniacs, the worst of fiends, and the basest of villains.

No wonder that St. Aloysius fainted away while confessing merely a few venial sins. But I who made myself guilty of so many and, perhaps, such grievous sins, what contempt can be too profound for me, what humiliation too great to atone for the insults I have inflicted on the Infinite Majesty? How thoroughly I ought to despise myself, and how earnestly I ought to desire to be despised by all according to my deserts. How sincerely I should place myself below every companion with whom I am associated, or rather below every person with whom I am acquainted, whether that person be old or young, learned or ignorant, kind or rude, virtuous or wicked.

Knowing that, in view of my sins, I have fully merited any rebuke however severe or sharp, I ought to be thankful when blamed or scolded, considering it a splendid opportunity to make some reparation for my past offenses. Even when criticized for what to some might appear faultless, I should sincerely condemn it myself since there is so much imperfection in whatever I do. Instead of repining when others are esteemed and praised, I ought to rejoice at being made less of than any one else. Besides forgiving from my heart those who have done me harm, I must treat such as have in any way afflicted me, as my real

benefactors and devoted friends. Not only must I persuade myself that the meanest things in the House should be assigned to my use because they could suit nobody better; but I must also, of my own accord, choose for myself always the poorest and the worst.

Having in the past, for the sake of creatures, become a rebel against God, I must in the future, for the sake of God, humble my wicked self by practising prompt, loving, and blind Obedience. Far from deeming any labor too hard or too dull for me, I ought to look upon it as a special favor to be burdened with the lowliest toil and to be employed in the most menial occupations. Not content with constantly fostering in my heart true self-contempt and real self-hatred, I should entertain for all other persons sentiments of sincere esteem and affection, and in my dealings with them give expression to these dispositions as far as circumstances will permit. Besides carefully avoiding anything that could reasonably displease them, I should particularly aim at rendering them every kind of lowly and loving service. For God resists the proud but exalts the humble. He will not, He cannot communicate Himself to those who lift themselves up in their own conceit; but those who are eager, for His sake, to make themselves in every way the devoted servants of their fellow men, He is wont to admit to the sweetest and holiest intimacy of the Saints.

Again, considering that by my numerous offenses I have greatly fostered my inborn tendencies to evil and accumulated a large debt of temporal punishment, I must not only wage a relentless war against my rebellious passions, but also strive daily to make due satisfaction to the Divine Justice. On the one hand, therefore, I ought to keep strict guard over my

senses, over my imagination, over my heart; and not to seek my ease, my rest, or my comfort, except when really necessary. On the other hand, I must faithfully practise the various mortifications imposed by rule or custom on all the members of the Community, and besides, by means of additional penances, daily inflict on my sinful flesh as much chastisement as allowed.

For though it be true that the Blood of Christ our Savior was shed to atone for our iniquities, yet even so there remains much to be paid for by ourselves, either in this world or in the next. So horrible and loathsome is the stain left by sin on the soul, that if it were to be presented in this state before the throne of God, it would spontaneously plunge itself into the terrible fire of Purgatory. To stay in the Divine Presence, if such a thing were possible under these circumstances, would cause it an anguish incomparably more grievous than all the torments inflicted by those cleansing flames. And the same holds true to some extent also in this life, of a soul that begins to love God in real earnest. It cannot bear to appear in prayer before Him, the Infinite Holiness, unless it has used every means to expiate its sins. It longs to wash away even the least stain, to pay off its debt to the last farthing; and hence it eagerly embraces every mortification and humiliation as a most valuable opportunity to attain its object.

Third Motive of Humility. I Ought to become a Saint.

Though by nature a mere nothing, and by sin a horrid monster, yet by grace I am called to become like to Jesus, my Divine Master, Who is Meek and Humble of Heart. To this, in fact, I have already bound my-

self by my Vows; this is to be the exclusive aim of my remaining years, to imitate my God made Man for love of me, particularly in His Humility. God made Man; what a marvelous self-abasement, since the nature He assumed was both inferior and degraded. Yet even this was not enough for Him. He became Man to serve men. He served His Parents as a Child; He served those who engaged His labors as a village carpenter; He served in healing, in teaching, in correcting, in commanding. Indeed, we must not think that teaching, correcting, or commanding, is less of a service than other work done for our neighbor. On the contrary, the higher we are placed the more it is our privilege to serve. Hence our Holy Father the Pope, in calling himself the Servant of the Servants of God, is merely stating something inseparable from his sublime office of Pastor of the Universal Church.

But Jesus became Man to serve us with such entire self-forgetfulness, with such unbounded devotedness, that no slave could render better service to his master. Never was there slavery either more loving or more absolute than that embraced by our Lord. "The Son of Man," He said, "is not come to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life for the redemption of many." This then is our Example, our Model. By nature we are the slaves of God, by sin we made ourselves the slaves of Satan, by grace we must become the most humble, most devoted slaves of every man with whom we come in contact. If engaged in mental occupations, we will study not for the pleasure we may get out of books, but to fit ourselves to be the slaves of our fellow men. If performing household duties, we will do so not for temporal gain or from mere necessity, but because we desire nothing better

than to be the slaves of our brethren. In fact, we will make it our constant practice to look upon all as our superiors, whom it is our glorious task to serve at the call of God and for the love of Jesus.

But more than this, Christ our Lord became Man especially to be afflicted for my sake and to be insulted on my account; and I in return ought to welcome contempt and hardship for love of Him, in order to become like to Him, my God. No higher nobility, no truer happiness can be conceived in this world than that which is found in being ignored and despised with Jesus, in bearing poverty and pain with Jesus, in being bound and buffeted with Jesus, in being trodden down and spit upon with Jesus, in being falsely accused and barbarously mocked with Jesus, in being cruelly scourged and ignominiously crucified with Jesus, the Son of God. He divinized revilings and sufferings, and those who accept them and seek them for His sake, are really pursuing the greatest good on earth as well as the loftiest glory in Heaven. Christ rejected honors, riches, and pleasures; and we too should consider them as worthless. For if these things were worth having, certainly the Eternal Wisdom would have coveted them; but on the contrary He coveted contumely, destitution, and affliction.

“Learn of Me, because I am meek and humble of Heart.” This, our Lord assures us, is the only way to find rest for our souls, that rest, that peace which surpasses all understanding and in comparison with which even the noblest enjoyment in the natural order is but bitter desolation. Let us not think Humility hard to practise or difficult to acquire. “My yoke is sweet and My burden light,” says the Infallible Truth. No; pride is hard, sin is hard, inordination

is hard, worldliness is hard; while Humility is the heavenly balm that sweetens and softens all the ills of this time of exile and temptation. And with the help of grace, which is ever offered us in profuse abundance, we now resolve again to apply ourselves to this virtue unremittingly for the remainder of our lives, by seeking and embracing every opportunity of poverty, pain, obscurity, and contempt, in reparation for our sins and in imitation of Jesus Christ, our Crucified Spouse.

TWO STANDARDS

Introductory Remarks.—All mankind may be said to follow either of two banners: the one of Christ, our Sovereign Leader and Lord; the other of Lucifer, the mortal enemy of our human nature. “He that is not with Me, is against Me,” says the Son of God, “and he that gathers not with Me, scatters.” In this Exercise there is, of course, no question of choosing between these Two Standards. That we have done long ago and forever. But St. Ignatius proposes this Meditation that we may recognize more clearly the irreconcilable Opposition existing between the two Leaders of mankind, that we may realize more intimately the terrible Dangers to which we are constantly exposed in this life, that we may understand more thoroughly the solid Principles which should ever govern the work of our personal sanctification as well as our labors for the salvation of our neighbor, and that thus we may become more intelligent, more sincere, more ardent, more efficient Followers and Apostles of Christ our Lord. Two Standards emphasizes the momentous truth, that unless we ourselves are wholly imbued with the teachings of our Divine Savior, and steadily strive to guide our fellow men in perfect accordance with the directions of our Heavenly King, we shall only be playing into the hands of Satan, our infernal enemy. Neither wealth nor learning nor culture will ever convert a single soul or effect one iota of spiritual improvement.

Subject of this Meditation.—Christ desires and calls all men to range themselves under His standard; Lucifer on the contrary plots to get them under his. God most sincerely wishes our sanctification and salvation, our temporal happiness and eternal bliss, by the profession of supernatural faith and the practice of good works; while Satan labors to bring about our present misery and our future ruin.

Composition of Place.—A vast plain in the region about Jerusalem where the Supreme Leader of all the good is Christ our Lord; and another plain in the country of Babylon where the chief of the enemy is Lucifer.

Petition.—Knowledge of the deadly deceits of the wicked chieftain and help to guard against them; knowledge also of the life-giving truths which our Sovereign Leader points out and grace to follow Him.

First Point. Persons and Actions.

“Imagine,” says St. Ignatius, “the chieftain of all the enemy as seated in that great plain of Babylon on a lofty throne of fire and smoke, in aspect horrible and fearful.”—“That great plain,” indicates vast resources and momentous issues,—“Babylon,” the center of disorder,—“a lofty throne,” pride,—“fire,” perpetual unrest,—“smoke,” darkness,—while “horrible” means loathsome in himself, and “fearful,” breathing cruel hatred to others.

On the other hand, “consider how Christ our Lord, in aspect fair and winning, takes His station, on a lowly spot, in a great plain of the country near Jerusalem.”—“Our Lord,” by birthright as God, by donation as Man,—“fair and winning,” ineffably Beauti-

ful and infinitely Loving,—“takes His station,” not like a selfish tyrant but like a Devoted Captain,—“on a lowly spot,” in true humility,—“in a great plain,” the immense realm of grace,—“near Jerusalem,” the city of harmony and peace.

This twofold picture should not only intensify our aversion for Satan, our implacable foe, as well as for whatever reflects his spirit; but it should also fill us with admiration for Jesus, our Merciful Savior, and for everything that is modeled on His divine example.

Having first directed our attention to the opposite traits of these two leaders, St. Ignatius, in the next place, bids us reflect on their different ways of acting. “Consider,” he says, “how Satan summons together innumerable devils, how he disperses them to different cities, throughout the whole world, not omitting a single province, locality, class, or person,”—“Satan summons,” imperiously,—“disperses,” violently,—“innumerable devils,” an almost countless host of fallen angels that slavishly obey him through fear and hatred,—“not omitting a single person.” Each man has a demon to tempt him, to lead him astray, to destroy him, body and soul. How great is our danger! Every suggestion of self-complacency, of vanity, of pride, of envy, of resentment, of impatience, of sensuality, is either prompted or fostered by that evil genius. How this fact should help to keep us humble. But unfortunately our heart may be so addicted to these vices, that we do not notice the continual working of our infernal attendant. There is not enough habitual opposition between our own soul and that foul spirit.

Again, “consider how the Lord of the whole world chooses out so many persons,—apostles, disciples,

and so forth,—and sends them all over the earth to diffuse His sacred doctrine through every class and condition of men.”—“The Lord chooses,” by the grace of Vocation,—what an honor for such persons, since they are given the same office as that of the Angels,—“and sends them,” with all kindness. We too have been sent by Him to the particular locality where we are actually staying through Obedience. As the chosen messengers of the Son of God we should be distinguished by our intense devotion to His Sacred Person and by our perfect docility to His Divine Guidance.

By the omission of “men” on the side of Satan and of “angels” on the side of Christ, St. Ignatius probably intended to emphasize the truth that ours is a spiritual combat, a warfare with the powers of darkness, as pointed out by the Apostle St. Paul. “For our wrestling is not against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers, against the rulers of the world of this darkness, against the spirits of wickedness in the high places.” However, just as we should not ignore the fact that the Angels are sent by God to protect, assist, and save us; so we must not overlook the other fact, that many men are aiding the Demons in their work of deception and enthrallment; namely, all those whose lives are governed by the love of riches, pleasures, and honors, in one word, the followers of the world. It is such people as these that manage our yellow dailies and spicy magazines, that write our salacious novels and immoral plays, that own our disreputable dance-halls and infamous pleasure-resorts, that support our irreligious schools as well as our temples of error, superstition, and atheism. Lucifer has, indeed, not a few human satellites.

Second Point. Tactics and Aims.

"Consider the address which Satan makes, and how he commands his demons to lay snares and prepare chains; telling them how they are first to induce men to covet earthly riches,—as he is wont to do in most cases,—that they may more easily go after worldly honor and then come to unbounded pride. So that the first step is riches, the second honor, the third pride, and from these three steps he leads them on to all other vices."

This injunction of Satan not only displays his despotic character but also reveals his deep cunning and deceitful malice. He does not endeavor straightway to lead us into sin by means of violent temptations. Such assaults may sometimes serve only as a blind to throw us off our guard. His plan is to work first on our inborn leaning towards the objects which minister to our earthly existence, under pretext that these things are indifferent, or rather that they are good—for, in the words of Holy Scripture, "God saw all He had made, and it was very good"—; that, accordingly, they may contribute to our happiness; and hence that there is no reason why we could not make a right use of them. How many young people, even in spite of a Catholic education, allow themselves to be deceived by Satan when they start out in the world and enter a profession with no other object in view than to make money. What renders men particularly liable to deception in this matter is to fancy that they have no inclination towards wealth and renown. As long as these things seem entirely beyond our reach we may, perhaps, not be conscious of any positive craving for them; but how different we begin to feel in their regard the moment we perceive a favorable occasion of getting them within our grasp. Be-

sides, have we no repugnance for poverty and contempt? Of course, we all have. Then we also love riches and honors in exactly the same degree.

This is our weak spot, and Satan takes care to attack us here in every way. Just as he strives to make us desire temporal goods and earthly distinctions on the false assumption that they are indispensable for our happiness, our health, or our usefulness; so he strives to make us dread poverty and contempt, mortification and humiliation, by picturing these to us as incompatible with our happiness, our health, or our usefulness. But let us not be alarmed by these bugaboos. The Saints were not only the happiest but also the most efficient men that ever existed, and on the whole they lived longer than tepid Religious and sinful Worldlings. All tenderness and heroism, it has been well said, goes with poverty and privation, not with wealth and comfort. Again, while Satan promises peace and happiness which he cannot give and indeed would not give even if he could, he intends only to render us miserable here and hereafter; and how well he succeeds we know by our own experience and by what we see daily going on round about us in the world.

The Snares of Satan, consequently, are the Possession, the Use, or the Desire of things Pleasant, whether superfluous or necessary, but cherished without regard to the Will of God, simply in compliance with our natural Inclinations, and hence inordinately; likewise the Removal, the Avoidance, or the Fear of things Unpleasant, disliked without regard to the Will of God, simply in compliance with our natural Aversions. In other words, every Inordination is a Snare of Satan.

As Religious, in consequence of our Vows and

Rules, we evidently enjoy in this matter a considerable advantage over persons living in the world. This does not mean, however, that we are entirely secure from the deceits of our infernal enemies. A few additional reflections may help us to be ever on our guard. We certainly need health and strength, rest and recreation, food and drink, lodging, clothing, and conveniences, books, skill, and knowledge, personal appearance and social influence. We are already inclined, through the corruption of our nature, to esteem and seek these things independently of the Adorable Will of God, as it is manifested to us by Commandments, Counsels, Rules, Superiors, Circumstances, or Inspirations. Now Satan, through the suggestions of his demons and the seductions of his followers, is ever urging us on in the same direction under plea that these things are all good.

Hence, we are in constant danger of attaching ourselves to the various objects that may answer our needs, and of satisfying these needs more abundantly than is consistent with the Divine Will or conducive to our sanctification. By so doing, we in a certain sense divert creatures from their proper end and turn them to our own exaltation. So prone are we to this abuse, that we can hardly acquire a scrap of knowledge, or receive a token of esteem, or do a bit of creditable work, without getting at once filled with conceit and elated with pride. In fact, a common cause of relaxation in young Religious seems to be the self-complacency engendered by the more or less successful pursuit of their studies.

But the inordinate love of learning is by no means the only snare laid by Satan for the chosen disciples of Christ. There is another which is even more common and more insidious, namely, the inordinate love

of health. Bodily well-being is the greatest temporal good a Religious can possess, inasmuch as without it his other gifts must remain practically useless. Hence, our spiritual foes employ every artifice to foster in us an extravagant care for our health. This leads us gradually but inevitably to self-indulgence in rest, in food, in recreation, and in whatever else pertains to the welfare of the body; and so causes us to fall into pride by making us prefer our own lower interests to the Greater Glory of God.

The question for us is not whether things are good in a general sense, but whether they are good in our particular circumstances, whether they help us here and now to sanctify and save our soul, by praising, revering, and serving God. For instance, we certainly need clothes and shoes; but it is neither necessary nor expedient that they should be as fashionable and elegant as possible, or that our supply should be so abundant as to obviate any further recourse to Superiors for the next two or three years. On the contrary, we should wish and strive to have at any time as scanty and poor a supply as our Superior will permit and sanction. We may need sundry little articles; for instance, stationery, soap, a matchbox, a pocket-knife, a watch, cuff-buttons, a notebook, a pair of scissors; but anything beyond what is cheap and useful is out of keeping with our Religious Profession, a hindrance to our efficiency, and an obstacle to our sanctification. We need rest and recreation, food and drink; but no more and no better than is required to do our work, to perform our duties, to accomplish the Will of God. Perhaps we need information and learning; but this does not mean that, under cover of some kind of general permission, we can freely indulge in the reading of newspapers and

novels, or turn our room into a private annex to the common library.

All this is as plain as daylight; yet our inordinate tendencies are so strong and our enemies are so persistent that we have to exercise constant vigilance in order not to be led astray. It is not without reason, then, that the Church exhorts us to pray daily: "Holy Michael, be our Safeguard against the Wickedness and Snares of the Devil."

Finally St. Ignatius bids us "consider the address which Christ our Lord makes to all His servants and friends, whom He sends on this expedition, recommending that they strive to help their fellow men, by leading them, first, to the highest degree of Poverty of Spirit,—and even to Actual Poverty if God should deign to elect them to it—secondly, to a desire of Contempt; because from these two Humility results. So that there are three steps; poverty, opposed to earthly riches; contempt, opposed to worldly honor; humility, opposed to pride: and from these three steps men are to be guided to all other virtues."

These concise directions serve to put before us the Doctrine of our Adorable Savior, as recorded in the Gospels, about the value and use of the transitory things of this world. Nature, blinded by sin and deceived by Satan, takes an altogether different view. Just as we look almost instinctively for wealth and honor because of the gratification or exaltation they afford to the body and the mind, so we quite spontaneously shrink from poverty and contempt on account of the affliction or humiliation they entail for the body and the mind.

How different, by the way, the tone of our Lord's address is from that of Satan's. "His servants and friends," by nature we are His unworthy servants,

but by grace we have become His friends, the friends of Jesus, the Son of God. "Recommending," what condescension!—"that they strive," how this also reflects the gentleness of the Sacred Heart!—"to help their fellow men," this Religious may do very efficiently by their uniform simplicity of dress, by their constant and laborious occupation, by their spiritual conversation or correspondence, provided always their personal conduct be in close agreement with these fundamental principles laid down by our Divine Lord.

We now understand much better than before how we can succeed in the work of our Sanctification and Salvation. Whilst to gratify our inordinate tendencies, our unruly passions, in accordance with the Deceits of Satan our Enemy, means Slavery and Death; to resist them in conformity with the Truth of Christ, as embodied in both His Doctrine and His Example, means Liberty and Life. Satan makes a perfidious alliance with our corrupt inclinations in order to ensnare and destroy us; but Christ teaches us how to check and overcome them, because He longs to bestow on us real happiness and everlasting bliss.

Our Lord's first object, then, is to lead men to the highest degree of Spiritual Poverty; but gradually, of course, since there is question of the formation of good habits. The lowest degree of Spiritual Poverty is needful for salvation, and consists in being so far detached from earthly goods, as for their acquisition or because of their loss not to commit a Mortal Sin. Also this lowest degree includes a conditional acceptance of Actual Poverty, inasmuch as God might ordain circumstances in which Actual Poverty would be the only alternative. A much higher degree of Poverty of Spirit would consist in being so completely

detached from everything earthly, as not to commit a Venial Sin even for the sake of all the goods and wealth of this world, or for the avoidance of temporal ruin and utter destitution. There are corresponding degrees in the love of contempt, which might not improperly be called Obscurity of Spirit.

Since practically there will always be room for advancement, the constant aim of our prayers and our efforts should be the very Highest Degree of Detachment from the Riches and Honors of this World. But we shall never make any progress until we are thoroughly convinced that on the one hand every Inordination, and all the more every Sin, being nothing but a concession to our morbid craving for earthly Goods and Distinctions, fosters and confirms the old habit of Pride: while on the other hand every act of Self-Denial and Self-Conquest, every acceptance of Suffering and Insult, develops and strengthens in our soul the supernatural habit of Humility.

Third Point. Application and Fruit.

These simple considerations proposed by St. Ignatius in Two Standards, should fill me with intense gratitude for having been chosen by the Son of God to diffuse His Sacred Doctrine amongst my fellow men, and for having been admitted by Him to a State in which I am greatly protected from the Snares of Satan, in consequence of the three Vows of Religion. How difficult it must be for a millionaire to be detached from earthly goods, sensual pleasures, and worldly honors! Hence our Lord says that it is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter heaven. Again, these reflections should cover me with genuine confusion, seeing how poorly I have cooperated till now with the

grace of Vocation for my own progress in Perfection, and how little I have accomplished as yet for the Salvation of my neighbor; because, instead of leading him to the love of Poverty and Contempt, I have fostered his natural craving for ease and show, for comfort and applause.

But besides gathering from this Meditation lively sentiments of gratitude and confusion, we should exert ourselves to reap in rich measure its precious and manifold Fruit.

First, Two Standards should not only imbue us with a real Dislike and Fear of Riches and Honors, of pleasures and comforts, of distinction and independence, of approbation and praise, of anything that may feed our self-love and self-conceit, as the instruments degraded and abused by Satan to deceive and destroy us; but should also inspire us with a sincere Esteem and Desire of Poverty and Contempt, of suffering and discomfort, of obscurity and dependence, of corrections and reprimands, of anything that calls for self-denial and self-abjection, as the instruments ennobled and used by Christ our Lord to sanctify and save us.

Secondly, even in the use of those temporal gifts which we need to sustain our life or to keep up our name, Two Standards should teach us a habitual Moderation and Circumspection; while it should give us a decided Preference and Eagerness for occasions of privation and affliction, contempt and abasement.

Thirdly, Two Standards should cause us to Pray earnestly and continually for these opportunities; every such petition being one of the many interior acts which we shall have to make in order gradually to acquire an actual leaning towards Poverty and Contempt.

Fourthly, Two Standards should make us pass on from unremitting and fervent Prayer to what most effectually fosters the formation of the habit of Humility, namely, daily and persevering Practice in embracing every opportunity of mortification and humiliation.

These several deductions are after all but the logical development of what we learned already in the First Week. For even in the Foundation we understood the absolute necessity of counterbalancing our unruly passions by contrary habits, to be formed and confirmed by a lifelong succession of acts. In Two Standards, the machinations of Lucifer as well as the directions of our Divine Lord furnish us with additional and powerful motives for undertaking this momentous task. From the present Meditation we carry away the solid conviction that, while to serve God and to save our soul is practically impossible unless we offset our inordinate tendencies towards Riches and Honors by opposite inclinations towards Poverty and Contempt, this equipoise can only be established gradually, by frequent acts of self-denial and self abasement, performed under the influence of Heavenly Grace, in obedience to our Adorable Master, out of reverence for His Infallible Authority, and—as we shall consider more fully later on—in imitation of His most Admirable Example. It is evident that, the stronger these supernatural inclinations grow in our heart, the safer we shall be from the Snares of the Devil, and that their strength will depend on the number and energy of the corresponding acts.

Though we can never be perfectly safe whilst we are in this life, it is only in so far as we have formed these inclinations calculated to weaken, restrain, and neutralize our innate tendencies towards Riches and

Honors—which give support and furnish fuel to our Pride—that we shall possess the habit of Humility. Since this virtue prompts us to acknowledge our own vileness and our complete dependence on God, it also renders us submissive and conformable to His Holy Will, wherever and in whatever way manifested, and thus implies all other forms of moral rectitude. Consequently, those who have acquired the Virtue of Humility can easily be led to the explicit exercise of every other Virtue, in particular, to that of Obedience. On the contrary, the unbridled desire for Riches, the unmortified love of Honors, and especially the consummate vice of Pride, the three concupiscences, will lead a man readily into every kind of Sin, into every form of Rebellion.

In conclusion, our Adorable Master has now delivered to us the only Practical Program for attaining the End of our Existence and for promoting the Extension of His Kingdom. Its items are few and clear: we are to esteem, desire, implore, seek, welcome, and bear Poverty and Contempt. Relying, therefore, on the help of grace, merited for us by our Blessed Savior and promised to us by our Heavenly Father, let us resolve to conform our entire conduct, even in its smallest details, to this Divine Program. The sooner we carry out this transformation, the more we shall advance in true humility and real happiness, and the better we shall succeed in bringing other men to the knowledge of Christ and the enjoyment of Heaven.

Triple Colloquy.—“I will pray, first, to our Lady that she may solicit for me these graces from her Son and Lord, concluding with the Hail Mary; then, to our Savior that He may obtain for me these same graces from the Father, finishing with the Anima

Christi; and lastly, to the Father that He may grant me these graces, saying at the end the Our Father." I will give fervent thanks for having been received under the Standard of Christ; acknowledge with deep shame and great sorrow that I have so often proved a useless servant, perhaps even a perfidious traitor; and beg for perfect detachment from worldly goods and honors by being frequently made to bear toil and fatigue, privation and pain, slights and disappointments, criticism and derision, disgrace and insult, so that from this day forward I may show myself a faithful disciple and a fervent apostle of Jesus, my Lord and King.

A. M. D. G.

“MY CHILD, GIVE ME YOUR HEART.”

FIFTH DAY

PATRON: St. Francis Xavier.

MOTTO: “He that is not with Me, is against Me.”

SPIRIT: Aversion for the goods of this world, comforts and distinctions.

READING: Imitation; Bk. II, C. 2, 3, 4, 5, 7.

Bk. III, C. 6, 11, 12, 15, 29, 30.

Gospels; St. Luke, C. 12.

Examine in what particulars you have failed to observe the Rules and Customs. Go over them carefully, one by one, and consider what means are most likely to insure your amendment of the past and your fidelity for the future.

THREE CLASSES OF MEN

Introductory Remarks.—Already in the First Week of these Spiritual Exercises, we should have conceived a thorough abhorrence of all inordinate actions and of their source, our inordinate affections. In the Second Week, we should get more and more convinced of the impossibility of our affections being other than inordinate as long as we of our own free will retain or use the objects on which they feed, the goods of this world. For, on the one hand, we have a very strong leaning to enjoy these goods for our own selfish gratification; and, on the other hand, the Devil is ever cunningly urging us to seek, use, and acquire them, without regard to the Divine Will. Hence, if we are really anxious to serve God, to reach holiness, and to save our souls, we must be determined to flee from these goods as far as we can consistently with the claims of obedience and charity. This desire of self-spoliation, this dread of worldly goods, not only of their possession but also of their use, will be the more real and efficacious, the more intimate and vivid our appreciation is of the danger and deformity of inordination. In this respect, men may be divided into Three Classes, on which St. Ignatius directs us to meditate at this stage of our work, in order “to embrace that which is best.” We will center our attention on three persons selected so as to be fairly representative of these Three Classes.

Subject of this Meditation.—Three individuals have each acquired a large sum of money, say a mil-

lion dollars, not sinfully but inordinately, that is, not purely for the love of God. They all find, of course, in their affection for this money a hindrance to their actual peace and their eternal salvation, and they would like to rid themselves of this difficulty.

Composition of Place.—"Myself standing before God our Lord and all His Saints, in order that I may know and desire what is most acceptable to His Divine Goodness."—Why standing, one might ask, and not prostrate? To remind me that I should always keep ready to carry out the Holy Will of God.

Petition.—"To embrace that which is best for the glory of my Creator and for the salvation of my soul."—No one can fail to notice the close correspondence between the grace asked for in this petition and the disposition pointed out by St. Ignatius in the concluding words of the Foundation: "Desiring and choosing what is most conducive to the end for which we have been created."

First Point. Different Conduct of the Three Individuals.

The First Individual would like to shake off the affection he has for the money, so as to find in peace God our Lord, and so as to know how to save his soul; but he Takes No Means even up to the hour of death.

This person would wish to correct his faulty disposition and to feel at ease about his eternal salvation, provided he could secure these advantages without any exertion or suffering. He is one of those who dream of accomplishing a task without labor, of curing a fever without treatment, of gaining a victory without conflict. As a matter of fact, however, he

does nothing, makes absolutely no effort, but puts off his amendment, his conversion, indefinitely. What folly and what risk! Folly, because these worldly goods cannot satisfy his heart and will abandon him anyhow sooner or later; risk, because they are recommended by Satan and repudiated by Christ.

If my past record be that of this First Individual, I must remember that not to advance, not to have an efficacious wish to advance, means to go back, and that my unmortified attachments will surely lead me into sin. But no; I must not put off my amendment, my conversion any longer. I must take action; I must earnestly pray for help; I must put into practice the teaching of Christ, my Savior; I must apply myself to mortification and humility.

The Second Individual also desires to shake off his affection for the money; but he wishes to do so in such a way as to retain its possession, as though God ought to come down to him; and he does not resolve, even if this should be better, to leave the Money in order to go to God.

This person has only a conditional wish but no energetic will to set himself right. He wants to obtain the end but refuses to adopt the means. He is ready to detach his heart from the money, if only he may keep the coin in his safe. He is anxious to make any and every sacrifice except the one which his case demands. He would like to practise Spiritual Poverty without having a conditional desire of Actual Poverty. He is like a Religious who pretends to strive after perfect obedience whilst managing that nothing be enjoined on him at variance with his own whims, to imitate the purity of the angels provided he need not wage a continual warfare with his lower nature, to devote himself to works of charity though

full of resentment against whoever may chance to cross his self-love or self-esteem. All this is a palpable contradiction and a gross illusion. The plain truth is that this Second Individual is satisfied to remain in the trap set for him by Satan; though, of course, he would prefer not to feel its inconvenience nor to incur any danger. Meanwhile he tries to arrange matters to his own liking, and expects God to connive at his inordinate attachment. What duplicity! What insolence!

Evidently, a person who acts after this manner is not determined to make the greatest possible progress, which we saw was the one indispensable disposition for entering on the Retreat; he has utterly failed to realize the wonderful predilection of our Divine Savior in his regard, to which alone he owes his preservation from eternal perdition; he has not conceived any real abhorrence of sin and inordination; he has not ratified the unreserved offering of himself in the Kingdom of Christ; and as a willing captive he is already passing over to the Standard of Lucifer. If I am anxious to vanquish my attachments and repugnances, to become more united to God by true humility and ardent love, I must be careful to avoid the fatal mistake of this Second Individual.

The Third Individual also wishes to shake off his inordinate affection, but without any desire either to retain or not to retain the money. He does not intend to give it any more thought, except in so far as this shall seem better for the praise and service of the Divine Majesty. The Greater Glory of God is the only thing that will move him either to take or to leave the money, but meanwhile he wants to consider that he has actually Left it All.

This person is really in earnest. His eye is single,

his intention pure, his procedure radical. To him the Divine Glory and his Own Salvation is in truth the one thing necessary, to which all other interests must be subordinated. Since he wants the end he does not balk at the means. Without minding the cost of the sacrifice, he looks only to its result. Hence he makes no reservations, puts no conditions, uses no subterfuges. Being as yet ignorant whether or not he will be called upon to renounce the money, he strives to make himself perfectly Indifferent in its regard. For this reason, he sets it aside as if he had never owned it at all; he refuses to make any use of it until further orders from Heaven; he does not even allow its future destination to enter in any way into his present projects.

In this way he corrects, as far as he can, the inordination committed in acquiring this fortune; and now he may confidently expect that God will cure him of his attachment. Once the cause has been removed, the rest is sure to follow with the help of grace. His lower nature may yet growl and grumble, but his higher self is already full of peace and joy.

Second Point. Application to the Removal of Obstacles.

This consideration of Three Classes of Men teaches me that I can neither remain inactive nor rest satisfied with inefficient half-measures, but that I should resolve to take the most direct and most practical means to overcome the obstacles which till now have blocked my progress in the road of perfection, in the love of Poverty and Contempt. All doubt is removed; all hesitation is excluded; between nature and grace there can be no compromise. If I really intend to sanctify myself, I must make an immediate start

by checking every attachment not wholly based on God as well as every repugnance not purely inspired by God; for instance, regarding a certain employment, in a certain community, with certain companions, under a certain Superior; or touching certain pastimes, conveniences, studies, pursuits, regulations, customs.

In such cases, a Religious of the First Class will say: "Oh! the Lord, through my Superiors, has given me an opportunity of reading this interesting magazine,"—or "of going to this grand entertainment,"—or "of resting in this comfortable rocker,"—"and why should I bother my head about the matter? 'Never ask for anything and never refuse anything.' I suppose as long as I do not commit a sin, it will be all right." Indolent and lukewarm, he deliberately chooses to stay in the Snares of Satan, nor will it be long before he wears the Devil's Chains. In fact, he has already completed the first stretch on the road to Hell. Such is the lamentable condition of those who no longer cherish any real desire of overcoming their difficulties. Yet even for them there is still hope, if only they will begin at once to implore the needful light and strength from Heaven.

A Religious of the Second Class will argue thus with himself: "Well, I am ready to give up this thing, whenever God, through His Providence or through my Superior, should desire to take it away. But meanwhile, I will strive to use it only with a pure intention for His Service and Glory." This, however he cannot do, because he neglects to take the obvious and only means. He may perhaps fancy that he is indifferent, but his readiness is nugatory and he is deluding himself with a false security, while in reality he is deceived and ensnared by Satan. In

some respects his condition is even more deplorable than that of the professedly slothful and tepid. But to whatever extent the soul has been blinded and paralyzed by this self-confident duplicity, humble and persevering prayer will eventually restore to it spiritual insight and vigor.

A Religious of the Third Class, if he can rid himself at once of the object, as a book for instance, will do so right away. If there is question of something more important that cannot be given up so promptly, an office, let us say, he will at least beseech our Lord most earnestly to take it from him, unless its retention should be for His Better Service and His Greater Glory. But if his attachment is very strong, he will without delay write or speak to his Superior begging him, if it can possibly be granted, for the very opposite of what he would naturally wish to have. Only such a person is taking no chances on his salvation, only such a Religious is actually faithful to his Vocation and really striving after Perfection.

A great truth to be kept in mind is, that God is not going to help us—and hence that it would be no use to pray for such help—unless we first avail ourselves of the means which He has already placed within our reach. So in striving to get rid of an attachment, our prayer to that effect should be earnest and is indispensable, but it will remain fruitless if we neglect to give up, as far as circumstances will permit, the object to which we are unduly attached. We should either surrender it at once, or ask our Superior to take it away if he sees good, or at least entreat our Lord to deprive us of it if this be not detrimental to His glory.

A few additional illustrations may serve to render this matter still clearer. Three Religious, for some

reason or other, took a dislike to a certain charge with which they had been entrusted. They thought it proper to expose their difficulties to the Superior, but he only listened to them kindly without taking any action or even making any promises. The First still continues to feel discontented and discouraged. The Second says now and then a half-hearted prayer for resignation, and is meanwhile casting about for an opportunity to bring up the matter once more before his Superior. The Third, having briefly stated his case, offered himself at once to be kept in the same office as long as it might please his Superior, and then went to implore the help of grace till he had completely vanquished his dislike.

Three Religious teachers are overfond of attending the intercollegiate games. During the Retreat they become aware of their trouble and consider how they may avoid the sins into which they have been drawn by this sporting proclivity. Says the First: "Yes, I have been a trifle inordinate in this matter. But what can I do? A man needs a little recreation as least once or twice a week. But, of course, I will only go when I can do so without neglecting any of my duties." Says the Second: "To be sure, I have become somewhat attached to these games. But in future I will go only when there is a general permission. Besides, I will first make a visit to the Blessed Sacrament, and ask our Lord for the grace of going solely in order to please Him and of doing all the good I can by my conversation and behavior." Says the Third: "I will not go any more; no, not even when I am allowed, but only when I am positively sent by my Superior. But I will take the first suitable occasion to tell him about my overfondness for those games. In fact, I am determined to do every-

thing in my power to prevent myself from going again, except my conscience tells me that it is for the Better Service of God. However, even in that case, I will pray earnestly for the Divine Help and mortify my fondness as much as possible."

Three Religious priests to whom the moderate use of tobacco has been recommended by the physician and who have received the requisite permission of Superiors, are gradually becoming a little addicted to smoking. Each of them happens to get a box of Havanas from a friend or relative, and without consulting the Will of God obtains leave to keep the cigars for his own use. Shortly afterwards they make their annual Retreat and wish to sanctify themselves. They find the cigars to be a hindrance to their project inasmuch as they are unduly attached to them. They also become aware that this attachment has made them commit several faults for which as yet they have felt no sincere sorrow. One of the First Class simply does nothing. One of the Second Class resolves to make a good intention before smoking. One of the Third Class takes the box without delay to the Superior.

Third Point. Application to the Acquisition of Virtues.

Besides to the removal of obstacles, the consideration of Three Classes of Men may be applied also to the acquisition of virtues, or, more generally, to the pursuit of holiness.

Our Lord teaches us that in seeking the Kingdom of Heaven we are to act like a certain dealer in gems who, when he had discovered a pearl of rare excellence, straightway sold all his possessions in order to buy it. This costly pearl is, of course, sanctity. Its

value is so great as to gain for us admittance to the inconceivable bliss and glory of Paradise; its beauty is so fascinating as to draw to us the love of the Adorable Trinity. The action of that merchant with regard to the pearl is set before us by our Divine Master as typical of what our conduct should be in the acquisition of virtue, in the pursuit of sanctity. We ought to proceed in the same resolute, energetic, and thorough manner, willing to make any sacrifice for the sake of the Kingdom of God.

However, only very few men take to heart the words of our Blessed Savior. Many are satisfied with expressing their admiration of the heavenly pearl. "How grand a thing sanctity is!" they exclaim, "how beautiful! how sublime!" But though, perhaps, they even add that they would like to have it, they never do the least thing to gain possession of that matchless pearl. Such Persons, evidently, belong to the First Class.

Others, again, pretend that they feel in real earnest about acquiring the pearl; they protest their readiness to undertake any labor and to bear any hardship in order to secure it; only they cannot bring themselves to part with the one thing that will be accepted in exchange for the glorious gem. They know quite well that the price demanded is none too high, but they are loath to sacrifice what seems to be identified with their very existence. These pertain to the Second Class.

But those of the Third Class, convinced as they are that the pearl is worth immeasurably more than what is asked for it, at once hurry off to sell all their belongings, in order to get the means of paying for the priceless object on which they have set their heart. In plain language, they renounce every creature that

stands between them and God; they cast aside every gratification of the senses or the passions that is not in accord with the Divine Will; they embrace every opportunity of privation, suffering, and humiliation that comes their way, in order to advance more rapidly on the road of perfection and to become more closely united to the Supreme and Infinite Good.

Briefly, then, it comes to this. Considering the unlimited supply of divine grace put at our disposal, we could long since have reached a marked degree of sanctity if we had really been determined to strive for it. Hence, it is our own fault that we are not yet saints. We deemed the sacrifice too big, the strain too severe, the exertion too intense. We lacked confidence in the leadership of our Captain. We lost our time in waiting for the enemy's onslaught. We were content to stay cowardly in the trenches; whilst to secure the Kingdom of Heaven we should bravely have gone over the top.

Before concluding this Meditation, therefore, I should, in the first place, earnestly ask myself: "What is there that keeps me back? What are the habitual failings that have been pointed out to me by others or which, perhaps, I myself have mentioned many times in confession, but which I have not yet exerted myself to correct? And what is the source of these failings? Is it some creature outside myself to which I am unduly attached or for which I foster an inordinate repugnance: some object, place, office, or person? Or is it some unruly tendency within my own soul: a selfish love of my comfort, my health, or my reputation; an ignoble regard for the opinion and favor of men; an unreasonable preference of my will and judgment; a dislike to open my heart to those appointed for my guidance; a resentment at not having

been treated fairly; a distaste for total dependence on Superiors, in asking permissions, in stating expenses, and so forth? Or is it simply a certain spiritual sloth, a shirking of the constant labor and watchfulness required for sanctification?"

In the next place, I should diligently examine whether I do not belong to the First or the Second Class, by only pretending or fancying that I wish to advance in the Love of Christ and in Holiness of Life, without taking the indispensable means, mortification and humiliation, self-conquest and self-abasement; or else by putting conditions to the Grace of God with regard to my cooperation, saying as it were to Him, "Lord, I am ready for this but not for that, I will go so far but no further"; or again by deceiving myself, praying perhaps oftentimes a day for hardship and contempt, but meanwhile neglecting to use the opportunities that are constantly present.

Finally, placing all my trust in the Most Loving Hearts of Jesus and Mary, the Supreme Models of Religious Perfection, I will resolve to purify my own heart from every irregular disposition, and to tear it loose from every creature to which it may be clinging, so that, henceforth, my daily conduct may be free from the faults which have marred it in the past and may, on the contrary, give evidence of solid progress in the virtues of my Holy State.

How is it, we may have often asked ourselves, that some Religious make good Resolutions and yet fail to advance in Perfection? The present meditation supplies the answer. It is either because they do not sincerely intend to carry out their Resolutions, as is evident from the fact that they never take any means to do so,—and these belong to the First Class,—or because, in forming their Resolutions, they deal only

with secondary difficulties and superficial trifles, not with their real obstacles and fundamental needs,—and these belong to the Second Class. Sometimes also this question is proposed: “But persons that seek everywhere their greater humiliation and continual mortification, are they not inclined to be towards others somewhat stern, harsh, severe, unsympathetic, uncharitable?” On the contrary, the only hindrance to true, gentle, tender, active, and generous charity, is inordinate attachment to self. We shall be charitable only in proportion as we become unselfish, self-forgetful, self-denying, and self-sacrificing. But such Religious as are content to remain in the First or the Second Class will never learn to practise charity.

“The same three **Colloquies** as were made in the preceding contemplation of Two Standards.” To this direction St. Ignatius adds a very important note and lays down a principle that intimately concerns our progress in the Spiritual Life. “It will greatly help us,” he says, “towards the uprooting of any inordinate affection or repugnance we may feel, to beg and beseech our Lord that He may take away the object to which we are attached or to send us the very thing to which we are averse, provided only it be for the service and praise of His Divine Majesty.”

Since men, without exception, have a strong antipathy to poverty, suffering, and contempt, it is evident that this ascetic principle finds a very general application all through life, and that, if we really wish to see Grace triumph in our heart over Nature, we should make it our habitual practice to pray fervently for opportunities of bearing such afflictions. But the note of St. Ignatius will usually find a more

particular application at the conclusion of the present Exercise. For by this time we are supposed to have discovered to what creatures during the past year we felt an attraction which we did not resist and to what other creatures we experienced an aversion which we did not overcome; or again, what status we should be delighted to get for the coming year and what other status we would receive with misgiving and disgust. Now, if we have at all profited by the consideration of Three Classes of Men, we should forthwith take up the work of our thorough reformation on all these points. In such matters as depend on our own initiative, we should, with the assistance of the Holy Spirit, proceed to act at once in a manner diametrically opposed to our unmortified passions; while in those things over which we can exercise no control, we should with great earnestness beseech and conjure in succession the Immaculate Virgin, our Blessed Lord, and our Heavenly Father, to dispose them in a way directly contrary to our natural tendencies, always understood, of course, in so far as this will not be detrimental to the Divine Glory.

THE TEMPTATION IN THE DESERT

Introductory Remarks.—We are all somewhat inclined to associate advance in holiness with absence of temptation and to estimate the amount of our spiritual progress by the number of our good resolutions. Yet we need but little reflection to convince ourselves that these notions are entirely false. No doubt, our future improvement is to some extent conditioned by our present purpose. But even if our resolutions are in complete accord with what we learned in *Two Standards and Three Classes of Men*, they constitute at best only our first step on the road to perfection. Strictly speaking, they merely point out the obstacles against which we are going to direct our efforts.

It is the subsequent exertion made in carrying out these good resolutions that will determine our advancement. But the hindrances we have to surmount, present themselves as opportunities of inordinate indulgence or as temptations to unlawful gratification. Hence our progress will be measured by the opportunities we have sacrificed and by the temptations we have overcome. In the present Meditation we shall learn, from the example of Christ Himself, how to remove the obstacles that threaten to block our path to holiness and how to vanquish the enemies that strive to bring about our eternal ruin.

Subject of this Meditation.—After our Divine Redeemer had received the baptism of penance, He went

to the desert, where He fasted forty days and forty nights. Then He was thrice tempted by Satan, who said to Him: "If you are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread;" and again: "If you are the Son of God, cast yourself down, for it is written that He has given His angels charge over you, and in their hands they shall bear you up, lest perhaps you dash your foot against a stone"; and lastly: "All these things I will give you, if falling down you will adore me." But the Devil having left our Lord, angels came and ministered to Him.

Composition of Place.—Mount Quarantana, or some other lonely and barren mountain in the desert between Jericho and Ephraim; and about fifteen miles to the southwest, Jerusalem with the Temple, which in spite of the distance we can distinguish by its gilded roof and snow-white copings.

Petition.—An intimate knowledge of Christ my Savior, Who permitted the temptations of Satan for my sake,—for my instruction by His conduct, and for my benefit by His victory,—that from henceforth I may love Him more generously and follow Him more steadfastly, in resisting the assaults of my enemies.

First Point. Prayer and Fasting.

Our Lord, to prepare Himself for His Public ministry, had withdrawn, under the impulse of the Holy Spirit, to a desert mountain region, and there spent forty days in prayer and fasting. Prayer and Penance, these are the two principal weapons of all faithful followers of Christ, but especially of those who are called to the duties of an Apostle. Before

attempting to labor for the salvation of our fellow men, we have to apply ourselves with might and main to our own sanctification, in union with Jesus, the Son of God. Unless we are thoroughly attached to the inner life, unless we devote ourselves unremittingly to prayer and self-denial, our zeal for immortal souls is apt to be little else than natural eagerness for worldly distraction, personal display, and sensible gratification. After the example of Christ our King, not content with patiently awaiting the onslaught of our enemies, we must carry the war into the hostile territory; we must bring our body, our senses and passions, under the undisputed control of the spirit; and subject our soul, our will and intellect, to the absolute rule of Faith, Justice, and Love. Mortification and Humiliation—pain and want, slights and reproofs, willingly accepted from Divine Providence or courageously embraced under Holy Obedience—these furnish our daily training in this supernatural warfare which takes up the whole of our temporal existence.

I can see my Adorable Savior there on the bleak and weird mountain, exposed to the inclemency of the weather, prostrate in a cave on the hard ground, imploring His Heavenly Father to bless His great Work, the Conquest of souls, the Conversion of sinners, the Redemption of the whole race of Adam; and through the very intensity of His supplications omitting for forty successive days to attend to the ever-increasing exhaustion of His sacred body. It is worthy of remark, that in like manner many Saints, docile to the promptings of the Holy Spirit, forgot to take their nourishment for one or more days, through the fervor of their prayer.

This prolonged fast and this severe mortification

were undergone by my Lord and Master, not only to atone for my frequent self-indulgence in eating and drinking, but also to teach me how I ought to join earnest occupation about my eternal interests to moderate disregard for my bodily comforts. An easy or lounging posture in performing my Spiritual Duties is surely not conducive to humility and devotion. Union with God demands detachment from creatures and implies power over self. Hence, while contemplating my Divine Redeemer in this forty days' Retreat on the mountain, I should strive by true and heartfelt contrition to make amends for my habitual slothfulness in prayer, my many distractions, my ready yielding to fatigue and sleep. It is only by repeated acts of self-conquest that I can prepare myself for the onset of temptation. But if I fail to watch and pray, my heart and mind will be continually influenced by the suggestions of sensuality and pride before I become clearly aware of them, and thus I shall fall an easy victim to the machinations of the Evil One.

However, it is not enough to be sorry for my past faults and omissions, I must also make suitable provision for the future. After examining myself once more on my spiritual duties, I must take the proper resolutions to perform them with greater punctuality, application, and fervor. Far from dropping anything that I learned to practise in the noviceship, I should devote to prayer whatever time remains to me after the faithful accomplishment of the work assigned me by Holy Obedience. And similarly, in the matter of penance, I must not merely never think of relaxing, but gradually become more eager to suffer all I can in expiation for my sins and in union with my Adorable Spouse.

Second Point. Our Lord is Tempted by the Devil.

It is plain that there must be a limit to every form of abstinence or mortification. "When Christ our Savior had fasted forty days, He was hungry"; that is, He allowed His heroic soul, no longer wholly wrapt up in prayer though always intimately united to God, to realize more keenly the pangs of natural hunger. Satan had evidently been watching his opportunity, and now judged that at last it had come. Perhaps he thought that our Lord, weakened by the long fast and wearied of the complete solitude, was yearning for a little relief and sympathy. Let us remember that our infernal Foe is always going about seeking to profit by every occasion, in order to bring our souls to destruction, and that we must not wonder if, even immediately after a more than usually devout Meditation or fervent Communion or successful Retreat, we find ourselves beset with violent Temptations. This earthly life is a perpetual conflict with our own Passions and with our spiritual Enemies. We can never afford to be off our guard even for one moment. The Tempter, then, concealing his real character under the appearance of a devout Israelite, approached our Divine Master with affected compassion, and pointing to the stones scattered on the ground, "If you are the Son of God," he said, "command that these stones become bread."

We may note here that his lofty intellect is so darkened by pride as still to make him doubt the Divinity of Christ. As to his words, though apparently a well-meant suggestion, they are really nothing but a subtle appeal to that reliance on earthly goods, which we have already considered in the meditation on Two Standards. "You have been fasting, my friend, it is proper that you should take

some nourishment, you have a right to it, or rather it is your duty, in fact, unless you do so, you will not be able to accomplish the mission for which you are preparing." Is it not after this manner that the Devil at times tempts also Religious? What he proposes at first is not a sin, but only an inordination, just a slight preference of our notions or a little gratification of our senses, indulged in without regard to the Will of God, as manifested by our Rules, our Resolutions, our Superiors. It sounds so plausible, it seems so innocent, but in reality it is nothing else than a piece of cunning deceit. This first Temptation, evidently, was one to Sensuality and Distrust.

Temptations to sensuality are among the first to assail us on the road to perfection and among the last to leave us before our passage to eternity. The taste, the sight, and the touch are constantly clamoring for gratification; and even when their material objects are absent, these senses persist in molesting us through the imagination. Hence, to discard the custody and the mortification of the senses is tantamount to giving up the struggle for purity and surrendering to the demon of sensuality. If, therefore, we really intend to persevere in our Holy State, how can we be so foolish as to permit ourselves any unnecessary indulgence in eating, drinking, or resting; or to grant our senses any undue liberty with regard to things or persons that for us constitute a source of danger? But, on the other hand, there is no reason whatever to be alarmed by sensual temptations, as long as we have given no occasion for them by our negligence or our imprudence.

How did our Lord meet the Tempter? With positive rejection of the crafty proposal as contrary to the dictates of the Holy Ghost, and with boundless

confidence in the providence of the Eternal Father. "It is written," He answered, "man lives not by bread alone but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God." It is well worth our while to consider this answer, in order to understand and practise the great principle involved. There are two kinds of life; the one natural, physical, inferior, which is sustained by earthly food; the other, supernatural, spiritual, superior, which in the accomplishment of the Divine Will is supported by Heavenly Grace; and this higher life we have to foster, if necessary, even at the expense of the lower. "Man does not live by bread alone." In how many circumstances I could apply this truth: in weariness, hunger, privation, sickness! These and similar hardships may afflict my lower life, but at the same time are certain to benefit my higher life, because they are ordained for that purpose by the Adorable Will of God.

Again, stones are not intended to be turned into food. To wish to anticipate the time or manner or means by which the Most High intends to come to our assistance, shows disbelief in His Infinite Power and distrust in His All-Loving Providence. It is precisely under the most trying circumstances that we should practise the most childlike abandonment. In order to pay debts, to secure funds, to get pupils, to obtain patronage, let us never have recourse to measures that are at variance with the prescriptions of our Rules, or with the directions of our Superiors, or with the traditions of our Institute, or with the maxims of the Saints. As Almighty God daily provided the Israelites in the desert with manna, so He can supply our need, if He pleases, even by a miracle.

Jesus had come to be like one of us, and though emaciated by hunger He did not wish to exert His

Divine Omnipotence in order to relieve His bodily exhaustion. By His own example, He desired to teach us that absolute reliance on the providence of His Heavenly Father which He was afterwards to inculcate so forcibly on His disciples in one of His first public utterances. "Be not solicitous for your life what you shall eat, nor for your body what you shall put on. For after these things do the heathens seek. For your Father knows that you have need of all these things."

Then the Devil, appearing maybe under some other disguise, transported our Savior bodily to the Holy City, placed Him upon one of the tower-corners of the Temple, and said to Him with feigned veneration, "If you are the Son of God, cast yourself down, for it is written that He has given His angels charge over you, and in their hands they shall bear you up, lest perhaps you dash your foot against a stone."

Christ, the King of Glory, permits Himself to be transported by Satan, the Prince of Darkness. What a humiliation voluntarily submitted to for my sake! I must, then, not become alarmed and disheartened if the temptation grows more and more violent, even if my body, my imagination, my very senses, should seem to be under the power of the evil spirits. For, as long as my will remains united to God in humble prayer, I have nothing to fear from all the assaults of the enemy. It is worth observing that the Devil in quoting the ninetieth psalm omits a very important clause, namely, "to keep you in all your ways," which limits the application to any person that is acting in obedience to Providence and not going outside his appointed sphere. Cunning and deceit form the characteristic traits of the fallen angels.

This second Temptation is one to Presumption and

Vanity. "Never again will you get so favorable an occasion to begin your prophetic career as you have just now by casting yourself down from this lofty position. You cannot receive any hurt since God has promised you His special protection, and the multitudes gathered down below in the courts of the Temple will instantly acknowledge you for the Messias." It is a common maneuver of Satan, when he is foiled in some temptation, to change suddenly to the contrary one. So on this occasion, after first endeavoring to provoke distrust, he now strives to instil presumption. But his other aim is to induce our Lord to an act of vanity, to a display of power likely to attract public applause. Love of the empty honors of the world, according to the usual tactics of Satan, follows after love of the perishable goods of the earth, as St. Ignatius points out in the meditation on Two Standards, and as any one can verify by observing what continually engrosses the hearts and minds of the vast majority of men.

Nor should we fancy that by entering the Religious State we obtained an instantaneous cure of all the effects of original sin. Though we left the world, the world did not leave us. The old leaven of pride is still active within us, and its presence encourages Satan to tempt us in various ways. Some Religious may have to fight this vice under the form of human respect. "Do not run away from these visitors at the first sound of the bell"; the Tempter may whisper, "they will not know what to make of you." Or again: "You need not be so particular about keeping the letter of the Rule; be a little more condescending and sociable." Other Religious are more directly exposed to vanity and may be prompted to force themselves upon the public notice by advertising their do-

ings, their plans, or their theories, preferably with a smiling photo the better to arrest attention. But also temptations to presumption are not unusual among Religious. "Why should you give up this reading? Do not be so fidgety, you must learn to brave the danger, you have to acquire a knowledge of these things some time, and for the rest trust in God."

The answer of our Adorable Master is another act of humility by quoting once more the words of Holy Scripture: "It is written, you shall not tempt the Lord your God." The Devil had invoked the authority of the Sacred Books, and it is by this same authority that our Lord confounds the cunning of the Tempter and lays bare his malice. This may well remind us that we must fight our enemy with his own weapons; what he suggests to render us vain we ought to turn to our Humiliation; what he holds up to make us impatient we must embrace as a welcome Cross; what he offers us to indulge our gluttony we must abstain from for our Mortification. So also, the more he engages us to show ourselves before men on account of our growing knowledge or advancing age, the more we must seek to remain in the background; and the more he wants to discourage us, on the plea of feeble health or apparent failure, from laboring for the salvation and sanctification of souls, the more we ought to put forth all our energy of body and soul in union with our Divine Master.

"You shall not tempt the Lord your God." Also to Religious our Blessed Lord addresses this admonition, particularly to such as wish to live within the sacred walls of the convent, without observing the Rules, without striving after Holiness. These surely are tempting God, by refusing Him that special Service for which He called them to this lofty State and

bestowed on them so many graces. But those, too, may be truly said to tempt God, who wish to become holy without applying themselves to the exercise of prayer, penance, humility, and charity; or who look forward to apostolic labors while they disedify their companions by their irregularity, their disobedience, their uncharitableness, and their arrogance; or who beg for the grace of rectifying their inordinate attachment to some creature without giving it up in so far as circumstances permit; or who expect to derive lasting fruit from the annual Retreat without striving to get a clear Knowledge of the obstacles which up to this have kept them back on the road to perfection, and without making such practical Resolutions as would be most likely to insure their advancement for the future.

Again the Devil, being this time permitted to exert all his power, conveyed our Lord to a high mountain—probably the very top of Mount Quarantana—and there represented to Him in an instant the kingdoms of the world with all their wealth and splendor, saying to Him, “All these I will give you, if falling down before me you adore me.”

This third Temptation, made without any deceitful reference to Holy Scripture or any pretended sympathy for our exhausted Savior, bluntly proposes a most grievous sin of idolatry. Satan knew from experience how far men will go when inflamed by the desire of earthly goods, sensual pleasures, and worldly honors. Those who are determined to satisfy these inordinate cravings, not wishing to acknowledge and worship God, the Infinite Goodness, will degrade themselves so far as to give adoration to the very demons of hell.

In this temptation, then, the Devil unmasks himself, he shows his ultimate purpose, the unbounded,

consummate Pride of the wretched soul that has allowed itself to be ensnared and enchained by his empty promises. Though he had obtained nothing in his preceding attempts, he does not hesitate to propose now a most horrible crime in an abrupt and insolent manner. It looks like an explosion of malice; he is no longer able to conceal or restrain his fury. After this manner, he may sometimes act with fervent souls that do not permit themselves to be caught in his Snares. Hence, once more, we must never be frightened, but bravely resist, putting all our trust in the unfailing promises of God. The very fierceness and persistence of a temptation is often a sign that our enemy has been worsted in his carefully laid plans and cunningly disguised attacks. But to be sure of defeating all his wicked designs, let us humbly disclose our struggles to our Spiritual Director.

Sometimes, however, devout Religious render their temptations more persistent and violent because instead of humbling themselves they begin to fret and worry. The same persons that are apt to fall into this mistake when troubled with imaginations or emotions contrary to chastity, may be prone to indulge in self-complacency, vanity, disobedience, resentment, criticisms, and complaints, without experiencing hardly any sorrow for committing these sins. This glaring inconsistency of conduct arises from the fact that temptations against chastity make us realize how truly our wretched soul is imprisoned in a corruptible body and thus shock our pride. But instead of allowing ourselves to get disturbed and vexed on their account, we should meet them, like all other temptations, with prompt rejection and ardent prayer, sincere humility and firm confidence.

Jesus replies to the execrable suggestion of the

Tempter with a forcible expression of indignation and an emphatic profession of humility: "Begone, Satan, for it is written, the Lord your God you shall adore and Him alone you shall serve." To the overt temptation Jesus opposes direct resistance; the blasphemous pretension of the Fiend He meets with the holy scorn of a soul united to God. "Begone, Satan." No hesitation, no discussion. It is thus that I too must reject all evil proposals, with unswerving fidelity to God, always falling back for my defense on His Divine Word, that is on His Adorable Will, in whatever way manifested, the Commandments, my Rules, my Resolutions, the injunctions and wishes of my Superior, the directions and counsels of my Confessor. This is a signal grace to be fervently implored day after day from the Sacred Heart of Jesus. How many Religious that seemed to lead the life of angels have through their self-reliance been surprised by temptation and have miserably fallen into sin!

Third Point. Our Lord is Served by the Angels.

Enraged at his utter discomfiture the Devil withdrew for a time, and forthwith the Angels came offering to Jesus refreshment, praise, and worship. Let us beg leave to join them in their loving admiration and devoted service. Let us also reflect that they exercise a similar ministry of peace and consolation in our behalf, every time we have faced strife and temptation. But even during the combat, the Heavenly Spirits afford us protection and stand by our side. Indeed, the words of Holy Writ, though referring principally to Christ our Lord, may be applied secondarily to every fervent Religious: "God has given His Angels charge over you, to keep you in all your ways." And this supernatural consolation

is only a faint foretaste of the inconceivable reward laid up in Heaven for those who here on earth have shared in the hardships and conflicts of their Lord and King. However, it consists not so much in spiritual sweetness as in spiritual progress; more Light, more Strength, more Love.

Let this, then, be the lesson which we gather from the closing scene of our Lord's Temptations; namely, that precisely with regard to our sanctification we should place a truly unlimited trust in Divine Providence, while making every effort to advance just as if our progress depended entirely on ourselves. With admirable wisdom and tender love, our Heavenly Father provides for each of us only such occasions of suffering and such opportunities of merit as, with the assistance of His grace, we can make use of at that particular time. Meanwhile He desires our spiritual improvement with incomparably greater ardor than we ourselves could conceive; and similarly His Blissful children, the Saints and Angels, with their glorious Queen, Mary Immaculate, are actually imploring our perseverance in virtue, with far more fervor than we can ever hope to have here on earth. With these facts before our minds, how would it be possible for us to entertain the slightest doubt about our ultimate success in reaching the goal of Perfection?

Colloquy with Jesus, my Adorable Master, the Conqueror of Hell. I will implore abundant grace that I may bravely labor and struggle under His Standard, promptly and energetically resisting every kind of temptation for Love of Him. Again and again I will promise Him, with all the earnestness of my soul, to seek everywhere my greater humiliation and continual mortification, that thus I may be enabled to

come off victorious in all the assaults of the evil spirits, instead of being disgracefully worsted, as has happened so often in the past. I will also give most fervent thanks to Christ my King, because, though He had no need of such special preparation, being hypostatically united to the Eternal Word, yet, for my instruction and encouragement, He not only lived for thirty years in poverty and lowliness, but, just before His encounter with Satan, humbled Himself most profoundly by receiving the baptism of John, and then persevered in prayer, solitude, and fasting, for the space of forty days. Accordingly, with firmer confidence than ever, I will appeal to His Sacred Heart for the grace of following Him henceforth more closely and more steadfastly in the Conquest of Souls. —Our Father.

THE TRIPLE FRUIT OF HUMILITY

Not a few spiritual writers maintain that one of the most remarkable phenomena in asceticism is the undeniable fact, that several Saints, at the very time when they had already reached a high degree of perfection, occasionally declared themselves the worst sinners on earth. But what really seems much more remarkable, is this other undisputed fact, that all the Saints, without exception, habitually treated those with whom they came in contact as their betters; or, which comes to the same, they habitually treated themselves as worse than the rest of mankind. After all, for a man to call himself the worst, the weakest, the dullest individual of the human family, would appear a comparatively easy matter; since hardly one soul in a thousand will believe him, while the remaining nine hundred and ninety-nine,—with the exception, perhaps of half a dozen simple folks that may mistake his words for a proof of Humility,—will prefer to think that he does not believe it himself. But to act invariably, on all occasions, towards all other men, as their inferior, is something diametrically opposed to the most potent tendency of our nature as well as to the most deep-seated prejudice of our race, and, consequently, extremely difficult.

Supposing, however, a person sincerely and constantly acts as everybody's servant, we need not be surprised if he should now and then declare himself such; for this would be only repeating in words what he has been emphatically asserting all along by deeds.

Surely, if an upright and virtuous man, not to say a Saint, treats everybody else as better than himself, we must conclude that he really looks upon all others in that light: and if he does look upon them as his betters, it follows logically that they are such indeed; for else his virtue, his sanctity, would be based on an error in judgment, a conclusion which is inadmissible; it follows that they are such, not possibly or probably, but actually and certainly. The only thing we need not grant, is that they are his betters in every sense or from every point of view. In what sense, then, and from what standpoint, can we truly and positively deem and call ourselves worse than the rest of men, and consequently treat them as our betters?

The only satisfactory answer to this query is furnished by St. Thomas and runs thus: "By considering in ourselves only what is our own," namely, our utter nothingness and profound sinfulness, "while considering in all others only what is God's," that is, the gifts they have received from Him in the natural and the supernatural order. But, some will say, of what practical use is this? In this sense, of course, every man is worse than all the rest. A child knows that. Quite so, this statement of the Angelic Doctor requires no elucidation; in fact, we might call it a mere truism. But just let us try to act upon it sincerely, habitually, constantly; and it will soon assume for us an altogether different aspect.

Yet, if we wish to become humble, that is exactly what we have to do. For Humility, according to the same authority, inclines us always to take our proper place with regard to God and whatever represents God. Now God is infinitely exalted above all created being and perfection, while we, as we are of ourselves, are placed at the other extremity, infinitely below all

created being and perfection. This also is plain enough even to a child; in fact, it is the same truism as the one just mentioned, only in a slightly altered form. But always to take that place, at least inwardly if we cannot do so outwardly, never to lift up ourselves unduly before God or anything that represents God, there lies the difficulty and there also lies the virtue of Humility as practised by the Saints. They treated themselves and wished to be treated as worse than all sinners, simply because they recognized in even the greatest sinner some limited participation in the Adorable Perfection of the Most High—a participation which they, the Saints, would not and could not find in themselves as their own.

On the other hand, as St. Thomas also teaches, Humility does not require that a man, taken precisely for what he is of himself, should lower himself beneath any other man, also taken precisely for what he is of himself; much less does Humility require that a man, considered as divinely endowed with various gifts, should lower himself beneath another man, considered without any such gifts, as a mere sinful nothing. Either would be an absurdity; while Humility is but the practical embodiment of a truth so simple and evident, that we may well style it a truism.

But why is it not sufficient to acknowledge and praise God in Himself, as the Supreme and Absolute Perfection? Why must we, besides, recognize and honor that Perfection in all His creatures? Because they all bear an essential relation to Him and hence necessarily represent Him; in other words, because He placed us in the midst of a multitude of creatures and, particularly, in the society of our fellow men, precisely in order that we might have an ever-present opportunity of exhibiting towards Him that pro-

found veneration, unqualified submission, and supreme love, which are due to His Infinite Excellence.

This indirect but continual worship would have been indispensable, even if we had been born in original justice; how much more so now in our fallen condition, now that we are naturally so full of Pride that it pervades, like a virulent poison, our entire being and infects, so to speak, the very marrow of our bones? Pride is the pestiferous source of every vice; every moral transgression is a consequence of Pride. Now, Pride is the very antipode of Humility, or to borrow St. Augustine's forcible expression: "As Humility is the love of God to the contempt of Self, so Pride is the love of Self to the contempt of God." Again, just as Humility presupposes a most plain and palpable truth apprehended by the mind, so Pride has for its intellectual prerequisite, not mere ignorance, but falsehood, a gross and glaring falsehood, by which we pretend to be something of ourselves, apart from God, and fancy that our proper place is somewhere between the infinitely high and the infinitely low, but not indeed at the very bottom of the abyss of nothingness and sin. In fact, Pride goes so far as actually to usurp the throne of the Most High. Instead of worshiping God made Man, it worships man made god.

Saturated, as we are, through and through, with this emanation from Hell, which we can readily detect in the self-complacency that vitiates so many of our thoughts, words, and actions, true reverence towards God is a sheer impossibility, unless we labor incessantly at counterbalancing this loathsome disease, this desperate madness, this monstrous perversion of truth and order and justice. How? By casting ourselves beneath every one of the numberless beings

that surround us, in so far as each, in its own more or less limited way, represents to us the Supreme Majesty of God; by shutting our eyes, as it were, to all that is weak, defective, and hurtful in other creatures, in order the better to observe in them what is powerful, perfect, and beneficial; and by being blind, so to say, to whatever goodness we ourselves may possess through the Divine Liberality, in order to rivet our gaze on what we are by our own birthright and achievement; namely, negation, corruption, and degradation.

In these efforts to humble ourselves we need not fear any danger of going too far. For Humility is not a matter of conjecture or sentiment but of sound logic and objective reality; it is incompatible with exaggeration and must ever remain in strict accordance with truth. It is, in fact, a Practical Love of Truth; nay more, it is the Only Genuine Love of Truth; because it is the love of a truth that is most distasteful, most abhorrent to our fallen nature, a truth that knocks down and dashes to pieces the phantastic idol of our inordinate self-esteem. And this truth is simply that, apart from God, we are nothing and worse than nothing.

To obtain Humility, we must study, grasp, and ponder this truth; we must get wholly convinced, possessed, and enamored of this truth; but especially we must act upon this truth with a never-tiring energy and an unconquerable obstinacy, in spite of the engrossment of duties, the cares of business, or the distractions of recreation, in spite of the buoyancy of health or the languor of indisposition, the elation of success or the depression of failure, in spite of the tumult of passion, the onslaught of temptation, the bitterness of spiritual dereliction, or the sweetness of

heavenly delights. And if we happen to notice something wrong, something deficient, something imperfect in any other creature, we must invariably take it as a most useful object-lesson, teaching us unmistakably what we are of ourselves, and reminding us emphatically of our own unlimited capacity for evil. In this way, we shall neither be disturbed nor disheartened by our own failings, nor be surprised or scandalized at our neighbor's faults, but all our knowledge will conspire to make us despise Self more heartily and revere God more profoundly, in accordance with St. Augustine's favorite ejaculation: "Grant me, O God, to know myself and to know Thee, that I may despise myself and love Thee."

Now, the benefits we derive from Humility are many and varied. This virtue makes us less liable to error and protects us against fraud and imposture; it cures us of the baneful habit of criticizing and ridiculing whatever happens to be at variance with our pet ideas and selfish aims; it frees us from the incubus of self-consciousness; and it renders us a welcome friend to all men, even to the proud. But leaving these minor advantages to future consideration or personal experience, let us for the present concentrate our attention on the Three Principal Fruits of Perfection produced by Humility; namely, a Life of Loving Prayer, a Life of Constant Mortification, and a Life of Ardent Charity.

First Fruit of Humility: a Life of Loving Prayer.

Evidently, it is only in proportion as we are penetrated by a keen sense of our own utter helplessness, that we feel prompted to have recourse to God, to place in Him our entire trust, and to pour out before Him urgent and incessant petitions for His All-

Powerful Assistance. But if we do so, since the Lord hears us whenever we pray to Him with Humility and Confidence, He will gradually flood our soul with His Supernatural light and reveal to us our numberless miseries more and more distinctly, whilst He will at the same time sustain our spirit with His heavenly grace and encourage us to renew our entreaties with ever greater fervor and frequency.

Besides, Humility, by causing us to refer to God alone all the perfections we notice in any of His creatures and all their imperfections to ourselves, enables us truly to live, according to the maxim of the Saints, as if the only two beings in this world were God and Self. Thus we are not only kept persistently in His Adorable Presence, offering Him a perpetual sacrifice of praise, abandoning ourselves entirely to the rule of His Never-Failing Providence, and directing all our actions solely to His Greater Glory; but we are also continually borne up from the consideration of His creatures, on the wings of a most child-like and self-forgotten admiration, to Him, the Inexhaustible Source of all perfection and beauty, ever exclaiming in spirit with the Royal Psalmist: "O Lord, how wonderful is Thy Name throughout the universe! As often as I behold the firmament, the work of Thy Fingers, and contemplate the moon and the stars which Thou didst fashion, I am lost in astonishment that Thou shouldst be mindful of man and shouldst visit the son of man in Thy Mercy."

But when reflecting how this infinitely Great God not only condescends to be mindful of man and to visit him in His Mercy, not only vouchsafes to labor, as it were, for man, in all His creatures, but even has deigned to come down from His realm of endless bliss, in order to be mocked and calumniated, to be

trampled and spit upon, to be scourged and crucified for man, and actually goes so far as to conceal every vestige of His Sovereign Majesty under the lowly appearances of food and drink, from sheer excess of goodness toward a being so wretched, so despicable, so ungrateful; then the humble soul seems no longer able to contain herself, she is pierced with rapturous grief, she is merged in torments and yet would not part with them for all the joys of earth, though she does not even think of this, but only adores and loves. And just as worldlings are ever looking for amusements and distinctions, and hankering after affection and esteem; so this soul is wholly bent on trials and humiliations, and thirsts for hatred and contumely, because she cannot bear, or rather utterly abhors, to be treated better or to be more respected than her Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

Second Fruit of Humility: a Life of Constant Mortification.

As soon as we come to realize, on the one hand, God's Supreme Majesty and Incomparable Holiness, and, on the other, our own utter nothingness and manifold sinfulness, we cannot in justice suffer that there should remain in us any danger of future disobedience or any trace of former rebellion. Hence, while waging an implacable warfare with all those wayward tendencies which were fostered by our faults, we feel an urgent need of paying, by this very means, even the last farthing of the immense debt of temporal punishment that we have contracted with the Divine Justice.

Again, the thought of God's astonishing Goodness and ineffable Mercy towards men, of His countless Labors and Watches, of His bitter Passion and

Death, of His apparent Annihilation in the Holy Eucharist, fills the humble heart with such an overwhelming sense of the heinousness of even the smallest deliberate venial sin, that no contrition appears too deep or too intense, no tears too constant or too copious, no penance too hard or too long, no toil too lowly, no fasting too rigorous, no chastisement too painful, to atone for such black Ingratitude.

Besides, we are conscious that as long as our soul is marred by any stain of guilt or punishment, there can be no question of that intimate Friendship, for which our contemplation of God's Beauty and Perfection in the continual practice of Humility causes us to long and yearn with the utmost vehemence. Spurred on by this loving shame and burning with a holy hatred of self, we shall invite all creatures to avenge on us the outrages we have committed against the Most High, and thank every being that brings upon us pain, distress, or contempt, for thus giving us a closer likeness to our Adorable Master, a sweeter foretaste of the beatific vision. In fact, this very desire of purification and atonement imparts to our heart a marked resemblance to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, ever Radiant with Absolute Purity, yet ever Consumed with Insatiable Longing to blot out our sins by the unspeakable tortures, anguish, and ignominy of the Cross.

Third Fruit of Humility: a Life of Ardent Fraternal Charity.

True Humility not only inclines us in every creature to adore and glorify the Divine Majesty, but also makes us esteem and cherish our fellow men inasmuch as they are the beneficiaries of the Sovereign Goodness. In other words, just as Humility leads

us unerringly to the love of God in Himself, so it leads us necessarily to the love of God in His image, wherever and in whatever degree that image may be found, but especially where that image is shining forth, or at least is intended to shine forth, with transcendent brightness and beauty, as in our fellow Religious.

Again, since Humility indirectly renders the soul subject and conformable to all Divine Law, Counsel, and Example, the mere recollection of the Son of God expiring on the Cross for the salvation of the world, a simple glance at the Crucifix, is sufficient to inflame a humble Christian with efficacious zeal for procuring the good of his brethren, the support of the poor, the service of the sick, the consolation of the afflicted, the conversion of sinners, the advancement of the just, the exaltation of the One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church.

Moreover, for a Spiritual Being, whether Divine, Angelic, or Human, love is an imperative necessity. "To love and to be loved," says St. Augustine, "is the soul's incessant craving"; and St. Catherine of Genoa declares that hell would not be hell, were it not that the reprobate are forever deprived of love. Consequently, as soon as the obstacles to holy love are removed by Humility, the soul is kindled with this celestial fire and transformed by it into the likeness of the Infinite Goodness, God. And as the Divine Goodness is essentially communicative, actually benefiting every creature to the full of its capacity, this supernatural likeness renders us at once efficient instruments of blessing to other beings, so that the higher we rise in heavenly favor, the deeper we lower ourselves again as the devoted servants of all, striving to bestow on each, according as circumstances

will suggest, esteem, affection, encouragement, care, comfort, assistance, whatever good, in short, Providence may have placed at our disposal. However rude, however degraded, or however perverse our neighbor may be, we cherish him with a love far more tender and far more operative, than we ever felt naturally for our dearest friends. We embrace the whole world, we desire to toil and suffer for our Charges, for our Community, for our Country, for the entire Church, and whether living or dying we long to become, in union with our Adorable Master, victims for the salvation and sanctification of Souls.

In connection with this, the end of our holy Institute, let us never lose sight of the grand principle laid down by St. Paul: "The foolish things of the world has God chosen that He may confound the wise, and the weak things of the world has God chosen that He may confound the strong, and the base things of the world, and the things that are contemptible has God chosen, and the things that are not, that He might bring to naught the things that are, so that no flesh should glory in His sight." This is the one absolutely indispensable preparation for the great work before us; to become foolish, weak, base, contemptible, and hateful, in our own sincere conviction and inmost appreciation. Without this preparation, no talent, no learning, no experience, no influence will be of any avail for the propagation of the Kingdom of Christ. But, if we are thoroughly humble, gentle, and meek, our various ministries and our very lives will be blessed with a wonderful efficacy for snatching sinners from Hell and leading souls to Heaven.

Such, then, are the admirable effects of Humility:

Love of God, Love of the Cross, and Love of our Neighbor. Surely, it is well worth the trouble to pray and labor for this virtue with all the energy of our being. True, our Pride is an evil most difficult to eradicate. Yet, what would be utterly impossible to merely human efforts, becomes not only possible but even delightful with the help of Grace.

Day after day, then, through the all-powerful mediation of Mary, Mother of God, the most lowly Virgin of Nazareth, I must keep imploring real and solid Humility from the Sacred Heart of Jesus, the Supreme Pattern and Prolific Fountainhead of every Virtue. Moreover, relying exclusively on His light and strength, I will persistently abide in the dark abyss of my origin; I will diligently explore the foul recesses of my vices; I will carefully regulate my inward acts as well as my outward conduct in strict conformity with the truth; I will unhesitatingly embrace every lawful means to remain completely hidden, unnoticed, and ignored, or else, to be known for what I really am and despised to the full of my deserts; I will eagerly seize upon every opportunity of lowering myself beneath other men and other creatures; I will everywhere claim, as my special privilege, to be allowed to render others the most laborious and most menial services; I will forthwith abase myself whenever any one bestows on me even the slightest attention or the most trifling benefit; and I will sincerely rejoice at the certain prospect that, sooner or later, all my vileness shall be revealed before the whole world on the day of the General Judgment, the day of the triumphant vindication of the Rights of God, the day of the endless exaltation of the Divine Goodness.

What, indeed, would be the use of cajoling our-

selves with dangerous illusions, of wasting the precious time in attempting to effect an impossible compromise between Grace and Nature, and of squandering our energies in fruitless endeavors to rear a lofty structure of Sanctity before we have laid deep and solid the foundation of Humility? God unceasingly demands our total and absolute surrender, as the one condition to raise us to real Holiness and inconceivable Glory. "Every one of you," says our Divine Master, "that does not renounce all he possesses, cannot be My disciple." And again: "Unless you become as little children, you shall not enter the Kingdom of Heaven." Our corrupt nature, on the contrary, unceasingly clamors for a recognition and independence which inevitably leads to unutterable woe and infinite disgrace. This absolute surrender of ourselves, this mystic renunciation of all we possess, this total abandonment of our false pretensions, this complete subjection of our inborn lawlessness, is Humility.

Humility is the root of Sanctity, the measure of Sanctity, the safeguard of Sanctity; Humility practically is Sanctity. Hence the first, the chiefest, and the only thing we have to do, is to humble our own Self. We must break off with this perfidious rebel; we must drive this contemptible wretch back into his native nothingness; we must confound this arrogant monster with his blunders and misdeeds; we must scorn the fantastic notions and morbid desires of this raving maniac; we must make this proud demon forswear all pretense to even the slightest share in whatever good there may be either in our body, or in our soul, or in our labors, or in our connections, or in our nationality, or in our Institute.

Yes, even in our holy Institute; for though this our

beloved Mother, thanks to the Divine Favor, has ever done and is still doing great things for the salvation and sanctification of souls, and though it be the bounden duty of every true child of hers to take a deep interest joined to an intense delight, both in her grand past and in her promising future; yet, as soon as a member begins to look upon this work with self-complacent satisfaction; as soon as he refers to it with uncalled-for frequency and emphasis; as soon as it tends to lessen his esteem for any of his fellow men; as soon as it no longer sends to his brow the blush of shame and indignation for still falling so far short of the lofty perfection put before him by his Saintly Founder; as soon as it does not rouse his whole being to more faithful imitation of his Spiritual Ancestors and Brothers, to more strenuous exertion along the path of Virtue and in the Lord's Vineyard, to more continual practice of Self-Denial and Self-Abasement; that moment he becomes a renegade to the principles of his Order, a destroyer of its widespread Influence, a traitor to the example of its Confessors, to the zeal of its Apostles, and to the blood of its Martyrs. Every Religious Society was founded on Humility, and in Humility lies all its strength, its beauty, its glory, its efficacy, and its very life.

THE TEMPEST ON THE LAKE

Introductory Remarks.—Our existence on earth is an almost unbroken succession of temptations and trials. To overcome our temptations as well as to surmount our trials we need Humility and Confidence. These two virtues are so intimately related that both grow at the same time, by the same means, and to the same extent. For, in proportion as humiliation rids us of our fictitious reliance on Self, grace fills us with a genuine trust in God. Being nothing less than an uncommon degree of Hope, this trust enables us to bear trials with courage and gladness in the conviction that, through the Divine Assistance, they will hasten our spiritual Progress and increase our heavenly Reward. The Tempest on the Lake is a subject which brings out the necessity, the beauty, and the fruit of Confidence.

Subject of this Meditation.—Christ our Lord, after having fed a large multitude with five loaves and two fishes, ordered His Disciples to retire to the boat and to go before Him across the lake, whilst He dismissed the people and went up into the mountain to pray. A violent storm arose and the boat was being tossed about on the waves, when Jesus came to His Disciples walking on the waters. As they thought it was an apparition, He said to them, "It is I, do not fear." Peter, at His command, came to Him, walking upon the water; but becoming alarmed he began to sink. Our Lord, however, saved him say-

ing, "O man of little faith, why did you doubt?" And when they had entered the boat the wind ceased.

Composition of Place.—The lake of Genesareth swept by the storm, and the boat of the Apostles at the mercy of the waves.

Petition.—An intimate knowledge of our Lord, Who dealt so kindly with His Apostles, that from now on I may love Him more tenderly and follow Him more confidently.

First Point. The Disciples on the Lake.

It is the evening after the multiplication of the loaves, by which Christ had given such a striking proof of His Divine Mission and foreshadowed the mystery of the Holy Eucharist. And now, almost immediately after His Apostles have filled twelve baskets with the fragments left of the bread, precisely now that the people aroused by this stupendous miracle, insist on proclaiming Jesus their long-expected Messias, their King, He is putting the obedience and confidence of His privileged Disciples to a very severe test. Without allowing them to watch and direct the course of this popular movement, so congenial to their national aspirations and their personal ambition, He simply bids them go before Him across the lake. He does not even tell them when or how He will rejoin them. Just now, when the prospects of their beloved Master look so fair, they must leave Him. So it may happen likewise to Religious, that, precisely when the circumstances seem most favorable for doing their work, either individually or collectively, they are unexpectedly removed from their sphere of action. Higher than the heavens are above the earth, are the

thoughts of God above those of men. Let us always humbly and confidently welcome the loving dispositions of Providence, especially in the arrangements of Superiors; but for this purpose it is evidently necessary that we should keep ourselves thoroughly detached from every creature.

The wind is contrary, the sky is overcast, the day is waning, yet the Disciples obey. This lake on which they are ordered to embark, may well symbolize the present world with its many dangers and frequent storms. It would, no doubt, have been much more agreeable for them to stay with Jesus on the safe shore or even to retire with Him up on the lonely mountain to some place of rest; but the moment Superiors ordain otherwise or Providence disposes differently, we must sacrifice all our personal views and natural inclinations with a holy joy and eagerness. Then, whatever difficulties turn up in our new career, we may count on the Divine Assistance that the waves will not overwhelm our skiff, that the waters of tribulation will not submerge our soul. But we must take care to have a pure intention in setting out, that is, supernatural motives and aims. For, if our heart is not fixed exclusively on God, if we start out with a view to some personal advantage, then even the lightest breeze of adversity is sure to upset us.

The Apostles, therefore, launch forth together upon the lake, a little band, united by sincere friendship, bound for the same port, and pledged to mutual assistance. In this respect they may remind us of a Religious Community. How closely united all its members ought to be as true brothers by supernatural love, living for no other object but to please their Heavenly Father and eager to render one another, for His sake,

even the most humble services. Am I such a Religious? Am I desirous to take the lowest place, am I ready to do the hardest work? Do I at least pray daily, during the Holy Mass and in my Holy Communion, for my Superiors as well as for the other members, for the sick and suffering, particularly for those detained in Purgatory?

But as the night advances the Disciples are being tossed about upon the billows, unable to make any more headway against the fierce tempest. Is this not a faithful picture of what has happened to us in the Spiritual Life? We pushed from shore full of energy, our first exertions made us get on fairly—such was probably our noviceship—but then darkness began to fall and to grow thicker, a contrary wind arose and waxed stronger, we were no longer capable of making any progress, soon we were drifting at the mercy of the waves, we felt our courage vanishing and feared every moment to go down. God permits these periods of trial and temptation, of desolation and failure, in order that we may learn experimentally to distrust our own weakness and may thus be urged to place our entire reliance on Him. Yet, all the while, we seem to be alone and abandoned.

Jesus had remained behind. After dismissing the excited multitude, He had withdrawn to the mountain to pray, according to His custom. Do I too have recourse to special prayer, when either I myself am tempted or some other member is afflicted, when adversity and opposition are threatening the existence of the Community, or when things look as if fervor were yielding to relaxation and zeal were lapsing into worldliness? Meanwhile our Lord is fully aware of the critical situation of His cherished Apostles, He is spiritually present in their midst, He diligently

watches over their bark, and it is especially for them that He pours out His most ardent supplications. So now in Heaven, He is ever pleading for each of us the infinite merits of His Sacred Wounds. What is more, He stays with us, for our protection and consolation, as the Spouse of our souls, in the Adorable Eucharist.

No doubt, the Apostles on their part thought of their loving Master; though, perhaps, some felt inclined to murmur at having been thus exposed to imminent danger of death. How foolish, how ungrateful, it would have been for them to entertain such a thought. I must, then, never think that I am really alone and abandoned in my difficulties and hardships. At the very hour when Jesus appears to be farthest away, He intercedes for me most efficaciously with the Eternal Father, and the moment I seem on the point of perishing is just the one at which He will show Himself again to restore me to safety and peace. The words of comfort which He addressed to His Disciples on another memorable occasion, should be ever present to my mind: "Let not your heart be troubled nor let it be afraid," neither in darkness nor in danger, neither in desolation nor in death.

Second Point. Our Lord Comes to His Disciples.

About the fourth watch of the night, that is to say a little before dawn, Jesus comes down from the mountain and goes across the waves towards the boat. He walks on the water, thus showing that He is the Sovereign Lord of all creation, and that He rules everything by His mere Will. Let us adore Him in this manifestation of His Ineffable Majesty; let us beg to be wholly immolated for His Divine Glory. How eagerly the lower creatures offer Him

their miraculous support and protection! So they often did also in the case of His Saints. How undaunted, therefore, our Confidence should be as long as we are acting under the orders of our King, combating under the Standard of our Captain, toiling and suffering in affectionate subjection to our Superiors!

As the Disciples see our Lord advancing towards them in a halo of light, they take Him for an apparition and cry out for fear. Under the stress of tribulation we too find it sometimes difficult to recognize our Divine Master. We are full of alarm through lack of Faith in the Infinite Wisdom of God, we fail to see His Providence in whatever befalls us through the agency of His creatures, and especially in what is entailed on us by Holy Obedience. But we are also full of fear through lack of Trust in the Infinite Goodness of our Heavenly Father. How displeasing, how offensive, such diffidence and cowardice must be to His Sacred Heart. But our Blessed Savior quickly reassured His frightened Apostles saying: "Be of good heart; it is I, do not fear." Thus, when Jesus deigns to reveal to our troubled mind His Adorable Presence and to whisper within our afflicted spirit His loving words of encouragement, all our misgivings and apprehensions vanish at once. And then we feel able to brave even worse tempests.

No sooner had Jesus entered the boat than, in obedience to His Will, the wind ceased; and within a few moments they found themselves landing on the desired shore. When Divine Consolation descends into our souls, it stills the most violent disturbances, and though, while the trouble lasted, we were apparently making no progress whatever, yet now, of a sudden, we can notice a considerable gain, inasmuch as we have become more humble, more prayerful, more de-

tached, more charitable, more obedient. Let us, then, not be disheartened because the trial is prolonged or because we cannot perceive any spiritual improvement. During the storm we are unable to estimate how much headway we are really making; and even if we had not made any at all Jesus, by one act of His Will, can cause us to reach in an instant the object of our life-long prayers and endeavors. Therefore, whatever may befall us, we must never slacken in our longing nor grow despondent in our striving after Holiness.

Third Point. Our Lord and Saint Peter.

When Jesus had said, "It is I," Peter cried out, "Lord, if it be You, bid me come to You upon the waters." And our Savior answered, "Come." What was it that urged Peter to make such a bold proposal? It was undoubtedly his strong faith and his ardent devotion, the desire of being as soon as possible with his Beloved Master. Let us imitate the Apostle in these his characteristic virtues. Let us long overnight to receive our Lord in Holy Communion. Let us strive to anticipate in the chapel the hour for meditation, office, examen, and visit. Jesus did not blame Peter's request; on the contrary, He granted it approvingly. We are thus reminded that it is praiseworthy to aspire after the closest union with Christ our Lord and to offer ourselves to walk the unknown paths of Supernatural Prayer. According to the testimony of the Saints and the teaching of the Doctors, nothing is better calculated to cleanse the soul from all earthly dross than the graces communicated to it in Mystical Contemplation. While we must never attempt anything beyond what is common, without an explicit call, an authentic invita-

tion of our Adorable Spouse, we should diligently prepare ourselves for this immense favor by unwavering fidelity and great generosity.

At that one word "Come," Peter descended from the boat and committed himself to the fury of the waves, where no human power could save him. But the event showed how acceptable this action was to our Lord. Peter walked upon the water and was coming close to Jesus. However, to perfect the faith and to strengthen the humility of His devoted Apostle, Christ permitted the wind to increase in violence. Peter turned his looks to the waves surging round about him; he got afraid, confused, despondent; and the same moment he began to sink. But aroused by this sudden danger, his faith at once prompted him to seek help from Jesus. "Lord," he cried, "save me, I perish." Why did Peter sink? Because, in spite of the command of Christ, he was wanting in confidence and doubted his own safety; perhaps also because he had become somewhat engrossed and elated with his success.

Something similar may happen to us, either in the outward temptations to which we are exposed in consequence of the arrangements of Holy Obedience or in the inward trials that come upon us on the road to sanctity through the permission of Divine Providence. However, let us always act like the Apostle: let us call on Jesus, our Compassionate and Gracious Lord. Surely, if Peter had continued to doubt he would actually have gone under. But the very imminence of the peril gave him a deeper sense of his own nothingness and made him appeal with greater earnestness to his Loving Master.

Especially in those moments of difficulty or danger when we feel thoroughly shaken in our good resolu-

tions, we should with the utmost ardor implore the mercy of our Heavenly Spouse. It was in order to comply with His Call that we entered the Religious State, and that we bound ourselves by the three Vows to bend all our energies and devote our whole life in striving after the perfection of charity, after the most signal service of our Adorable King, after the most generous imitation of Jesus our Lord. Let us, then, not get frightened by the thought of the demands made upon us in our journey to heaven, or at the view of the many obstacles, or by the length and severity of the contest. Far from it. But let us persist in appealing to our Divine Master, with a sincere acknowledgment of our past shortcomings and with a fervent prayer that He may deign to reach out His hand to us, as He did to Peter, and may enable us to enjoy at last His intimate Friendship, His holy Familiarity. "O man of little faith, why did you doubt?" Why so fainthearted, why so pusillanimous? All such apprehensions about the reality of our vocation, all such misgivings about our ultimate success, are to be utterly discarded. God is incomparably more desirous than we are ourselves to see us reach the goal of holiness. And who can thwart the designs of the Almighty? But without trials, where would be the merit of faith, hope, and love, where would be the very possibility of progress? Humility and Confidence will carry us safe through any trial, however severe or however protracted.

Colloquy with Christ our Lord, begging Him to give us courage in the correspondence to His Call, in the accomplishment of His Will, in the practice of Religious Obedience. We will express to Him our shame and sorrow for having on so many occasions

yielded to lassitude, depression, or despondency; and we will fervently beseech Him to pardon our diffidence and cowardice. And then, with renewed trust in His Power, Wisdom, and Love, we will conjure Him not to spare us any afflictions or humiliations that may advance us ever so little in His holy service or fit us in any degree however slight for His closer imitation.—Our Father.

A. M. D. G.

“MY CHILD, GIVE ME YOUR HEART.”

SIXTH DAY

PATRON: St. Francis of Assisi.

MOTTO: “My God and my All.”

SPIRIT: Courage and confidence in the pursuit of
Perfection.

READING: Imitation; Bk. II, C. 9, 11, 12.

Bk. III, C. 18, 37, 41, 42, 43, 48.

Gospels; St. Matthew, C. 26.

St. Luke, C. 7.

Make such Resolutions as you judge necessary to lead a really fervent life. These Resolutions should not be vague or general, but precise and practical. However, they need not be brand-new, but may be improved restatements of former Resolutions.

THE CONVERSION OF MARY MAGDALEN

Introductory Remarks.—To advance in perfection evidently means to become more lovable in the sight of God and more capable of loving Him as He deserves. But this mutual love can grow only in proportion as we rid ourselves of everything displeasing to our Adorable Spouse, that is, of sin either not repented by contrition or not repaired by correction or not cancelled by satisfaction. Not only ought we to be very diligent in seeking pardon of our faults by heartfelt compunction and humble confession, but after having been freed from the guilt of our sins we should labor persistently to uproot the vicious tendencies they have developed and to pay off the temporal penalty they have merited. These remains of sin can not be destroyed except by inward sorrow and outward suffering, in other words, by the practice of penance. The neglect of penance is undoubtedly the principal cause why some Religious hardly make any progress in the virtues of their Holy State. Our meditations, examens, and other exercises of prayer are lacking in fervent acts of contrition, our daily lives are deficient in generous acts of self-denial. That we may realize more vividly our needs in this regard, let us ponder the simple and touching record of the Conversion of Mary Magdalen.

Subject of this Meditation.—While Christ our Lord was at table in the house of Simon, the Pharisee,

Mary Magdalen entered carrying an alabaster vase. Placing herself behind our Lord at His feet, she began to bathe them with her tears and to wipe them with her hair, and having kissed them repeatedly she poured out on them the precious perfume contained in the vial. As Simon, in his inmost heart, disapproved of all this, Christ spoke up for her, saying, "Many sins are forgiven her, because she has loved much," and then turning to Magdalen He added, "Your faith has saved you, go in peace."

Composition of Place.—The dining-hall in the house of Simon, opening on a court or garden.

Petition.—An intimate knowledge of Jesus my Lord, receiving the homage and penance of Mary Magdalen, that I may love Him more ardently and follow Him more closely, after her example, even to the foot of the Cross.

First Point. Persons.

While our Blessed Savior is at table, with Simon, the Apostles, and other invited guests, Mary Magdalen enters holding in her hands an alabaster vial.

We may first contemplate our Dearest Lord reclining with perfect composure on the couch, according to the Oriental custom, partaking modestly of the food provided by His host, and striving by His heavenly conversation to enlighten the minds and touch the hearts of these proud and prejudiced Pharisees. What ardent zeal shines forth in His whole Person! Though He had not been received with even the ordinary marks of respect and kindness, customary in those times among the Jews, though He had not been offered any water for the almost indispensable

washing of the feet, nor the kiss of friendship equivalent to our more usual shaking of hands, and much less any special token of esteem such as the perfuming of the head with some costly ointment, yet our Divine Master, full of humility, meekness, and love, would seem only the more intent on procuring the happiness and the sanctification of His ungracious host.

From this we should learn not to lose heart if in the past we have been leading a life of tepidity, worldliness, inordination, and sin; or if even now, in our exercises of Prayer, in our visits to the Blessed Sacrament, in our assistance at Holy Mass, and in our reception of the Adorable Eucharist, we are at times so listless and so cold. It is true that by our former ingratitude and unfaithfulness we have many times grieved and offended Jesus. But He knows and compassionates our weakness, our misery, and if only we humble ourselves sincerely and lovingly, He will surely bestow on us the same graces as He would have given us had we been recollected and fervent. But how should we feel under similar circumstances? How do we act when slighted or ignored?

But now, to the surprise and disgust of Simon, Mary Magdalen unexpectedly enters the dining-room. A short time previously, perhaps in the early part of that same day, she had been drawn to our Lord by the fame of His miracles, had been moved to the very depths of her soul by His words so full of compassion and mercy for sinners, and had conceived a sincere contrition for her moral disorders. Animated by a lively faith in the Divinity of Christ, and filled with an ardent love for His Sacred Person, she had resolved to make atonement for her own sins as well as reparation for the offensive conduct of Simon. Be-

ing well known to the whole company as a gifted but free-living woman, she could not help feeling that all eyes, except those of our Loving Savior, were fastened upon her. The guests stopped talking and everybody kept quiet. What confusion! the more as she went up straight to where our Lord was reclining, knelt behind Him at His sacred feet, and thus made a public avowal of her wicked past, not only before the good and simple Apostles, but also before the haughty and sanctimonious Pharisees, and before the numerous lookers-on, her own townspeople. But she relished all this confusion, for it gave some relief to the burning contrition that filled her soul; it was like a sweet balm to her crushed and broken heart.

Oh! why cannot I imitate her? Considering how inordinate and, perhaps, how sinful my life has been during so many years, should not my heart be animated by similar sentiments of confusion and contrition, particularly when I am going to receive the Sacrament of Penance? Realizing that my Confessor takes the place of Jesus, my God and Savior, with what sincerity and humility I should accuse myself of my faults; and then what heavenly peace, what supernatural energy, the priestly absolution would confer upon my soul! Besides, in imitation of this holy penitent, should I not eagerly welcome every opportunity of publicly accusing myself of my failings, in order to humble my silly pride and to repair the given scandal? But the most important lesson I should learn from Mary Magdalen is that of self-conquest. All our religious practices, all our devotional exercises, all our prayers and penances, are worth nothing, unless they render us more vigilant, more energetic, and more constant in conquering ourselves, in uprooting our defects, in curbing our selfishness.

Second Point. Actions.

Mary Magdalen, prostrate at the feet of Jesus in a spirit of reparation, bathes them with her tears, wipes them with her hair, covers them with kisses, and pours on them the fragrant contents of the alabaster vase. Let me study in detail these successive manifestations of her faith, contrition, and love.

Having knelt down behind the Person of our Lord, as undeserving to meet His gaze or to occupy His attention, Mary immediately assumes the lowly attitude of a servant and a suppliant. How well it would be for me, if I were to make it my invariable custom to cast myself in spirit at the feet of my Adorable Master, before I begin my daily prayers, and, especially when I am about to receive Him in Holy Communion. There is no better preparation for this inestimable favor than sincere humility and fervent humiliation; and it is the only preparation He looks for, provided it be joined, as in the case of Mary Magdalen, to a boundless confidence, an exclusive trust in the Goodness, the Mercy, the Love of Jesus our Savior.

In fact, these two virtues, humility and confidence, always go together, for the less we rely on self, the more we rely on God. We are often, perhaps, dry and distracted in our meditation or at Holy Mass, because we do not approach our Lord with these two essential dispositions. We look sometimes too much for personal satisfaction and sensible consolation; or, what is worse, we go about these sacred functions in a routinary, superficial, indolent manner. Yet it is so easy to practise humility and confidence. Is not our very motion of kneeling down an expression of our lowness, an act of self-humiliation? And what prevents us from practising humility in all our deal-

ings and relations with Superiors, companions, pupils, and outsiders, by recognizing in them the representatives of our Adorable Savior, the objects of His tender affection, and by making ourselves, for His sake, their humble and devoted servants? If only we knew how rapidly this would advance us in the sweet familiarity of Jesus, how anxious we should be not to miss a single one of these golden opportunities!

She bathes the feet of Christ with her tears. O blessed tears of contrite love! I too should shed them oftener, if I realized better the disgrace of worldliness, inordination, and sin, especially in a Religious who has been the recipient of such precious favors from Heaven, has been the object of such wonderful predilection on the part of God, and is still being honored by Jesus with such extraordinary affection and such unfailing solicitude, in spite of all my shortcomings and infidelities. But I will keep imploring the mercy of His Sacred Heart till I obtain the grace of weeping sincerely over my past ingratitude. Oh, could I only blot out my whole wicked past with floods of burning tears! Meanwhile, if I cannot weep outwardly in humble prayer, at least inwardly my heart should bleed with genuine grief; and if my eyes yield no tears of penitent love, my body should bear the marks of just atonement. This much is certain: my meditations, my examens, my confessions, will never be instinct with fervent devotion, as long as I neglect to curb my wayward senses and to chastise my rebellious flesh and to mortify my selfish passions.

But as her tears fall in such profusion on the feet of our Lord, Mary strives to wipe them away, again and again, with the flowing tresses of her hair. By

this action, so beautifully symbolic of her humble love, she intended, no doubt, to express the dedication of her entire person to the Divine Teacher. What had probably been the object of considerable care, and perhaps the subject of no less vanity, she now turned to the most lowly and repugnant use; namely, that of wiping the dust and moisture from the feet of a guest treated with such scant courtesy by the master of the house, Simon. But what use could, in reality, have been more noble and glorious than this: to cleanse and comfort the sacred feet of Jesus, the All-Beautiful, the Son of the Eternal God! What have I got to dedicate to the Personal Service of my Lord and Savior? I have my limbs, my senses, my strength, my faculties, my talents. Already long ago I consecrated these entirely to Him, but from henceforth I will strive to carry out this consecration with the utmost generosity in the practice of Holy Obedience.

Then she kisses the feet of Jesus. Humility, contrition, confidence, and love, are all inseparable. If we desire to taste at times the wonderful effects of Divine Charity, let us ever be intent on humbling ourselves, inwardly before Him and outwardly before all those who represent Him, not only our betters and our equals, but especially the unsympathetic, the ignorant, the helpless, the haughty, the insolent, and the sinful. But she kisses only His feet; for even in the expression of our love we must be humble, waiting for the blissful moment when our Heavenly Lord will deign to admit our soul to the holy intimacy of a Spouse. Far be it from us ever to aspire to any of the extraordinary favors bestowed by God on some of His Saints. Yet she kisses them repeatedly. So should we ever be animated by a genuine and child-like fervor, never ceasing to testify our affection for

Jesus by a thousand little practices of self-conquest and self-devotion. For, every exterior action, performed thoughtfully and deliberately, intensifies in turn our interior disposition.

Lastly, Mary pours out the fragrant contents of the alabaster vial. It was probably a souvenir of some former acquaintance, an object, besides, which she had prized very highly for its own intrinsic value. But these are the very reasons why now she has selected it as a symbol of her own heart overflowing with love, as a holocaust to atone for her past faults, and as a tribute to acknowledge that Sovereign Loveliness of Jesus which had been so grossly ignored by Simon the Pharisee.

After the same manner, we too should strive to make to our Heavenly Spouse the generous sacrifice of every natural inclination or aversion, the unreserved offering of every object toward which we feel some undue attraction, the total renunciation of everything except His grace and His love, the complete and unconditional surrender of our entire being and all our interests. In return for His measureless love, He wants above everything else all our affection, our whole and undivided heart. How sweet-scented an oblation this would add to the priceless immolation of Himself in Holy Mass! Why can we not every morning bring Him a number of acts of self-denial as tokens of our determination to live for Him alone: superfluities cut off, apprehensions discarded, impulses checked, temptations resisted, resentments stifled, or repugnances vanquished? Only when every creature has been turned out of our soul, will God be able to dwell in it as our only Good, our All. Why should we ever hesitate to make such an advantageous exchange of the Infinite, Eternal, Beautiful,

and Glorious Creator, for a finite, perishable, shadowy, and ignoble creature?

Third Point. Words: Our Lord Defends, Consoles, and Dismisses Mary Magdalen.

All this while our Gracious Master, filled with the tenderest compassion, had allowed Magdalen thus to manifest her faith, her contrition, and her love. But Simon, the Pharisee, did not understand how a prophet, a holy man, could permit himself to be approached and touched by a sinful woman. In fact, his soul was too full of indignation to allow him to speak, but he had silently come to the conclusion that, after all, Jesus could not be the true Messiah. Any dislike or disesteem we may feel towards others, on account of their vices or defects, even though these be real and plain, comes not from Grace but from Nature, not from God but from Satan; and hence its immediate effect on our soul is to darken the light of the understanding and to extinguish the fervor of the will. Our Lord, by kindly manifesting that He knew what was going on in the mind and heart of Simon, gave him a delicate but powerful confirmation of His own Holiness and Divinity. How gentle and tactful are all the ways of our Dear Savior! How do I proceed in the exercise of works of zeal? in striving to maintain discipline in the classroom or on the playground, in laboring to correct the mistaken notions of non-Catholics, or in endeavoring to recall sinners to the practice of their religion?

But Jesus also wished to bring His entertainer to a recognition of his inferiority as compared with this notorious woman, and so to cure his pride. Accordingly, our Lord called the attention of Simon to the fact, that the various acts of service and kindness

which he as host should have shown to his invited guest, had been performed most lovingly and lavishly by this repentant sinner, whom he despised on account of her past misconduct. "Simon, do you see this woman? When I entered your house, you gave Me no water for the customary ablution; but she has washed My feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair. You gave Me no token of affection; but she, from the moment she entered, has not ceased to kiss My feet. You did not refresh My head with any fragrant essence; but she has poured the richest perfume over My feet." And then Jesus drew, from this different behavior, a most remarkable conclusion. "Hence I tell you, many sins are forgiven her, because she has loved much. But to whom less is forgiven, he loves less."

She had committed many sins, but they were now forgiven her completely, not only as to the guilt but also as to their temporal punishment and their injurious effects on the soul. In fact, who can doubt that Mary Magdalen by her contrition had recovered sanctifying grace even before she entered the dining-room? But now, on account of the deep humility and the great love she has shown in performing this public penance, the remaining penalty is remitted and the moral consequences are destroyed; all the evil of her ways is undone, canceled, and obliterated. Not so, however, with Simon. For though the sins he has committed are fewer, yet they are not forgiven him completely, because he has shown less love. Consequently, Simon is now actually more sinful than Magdalen.

Thus it may also happen among Religious, that those who are conscious of grievous faults committed in the past, show greater generosity and fervor than

others who were preserved, by a most extraordinary mercy and a most gratuitous predilection on the part of God, from falling into mortal sin; so that the former are now more pure and holy than the latter. Let us examine ourselves, whether we are like Magdalen or like Simon, or perhaps like neither, inasmuch as having led very foolish and wicked lives before in the World, we are still leading very imperfect and tepid lives at present in Religion.

But we should also learn from this incident, that even our former infidelities may greatly help us to advance in humility and charity, if only we resolve to conduct ourselves for the future like genuine penitents. At any rate, whatever may have been our past, let us live henceforth in such a way as soon to receive from our Divine Lord the sweet assurance of His complete pardon: "My child, your sins are forgiven." We have to get it anyhow before we can enter heaven; why, then, not strive to get it while yet on earth? O blissful moment! let us make the firm resolution to hasten its arrival by our unremitting fervor, by our continual self-denial.

These last words of our Lord, "Your sins are forgiven," made some of the invited guests wonder, because they still lacked Faith in His Divinity. Faith is the source of justification as well as the foundation of sanctity. Hence our Blessed Savior turning once more to Mary Magdalen, who was still kneeling at His feet in humble contrition and grateful love, said, "Your Faith has saved you, go in peace." Thus also in our own case, if we wish to become holy and perfect, we must strive to actuate, practise, and increase our Faith; seeing God in the Holy Eucharist, in our Superiors, in our Rules, in our companions, in our pupils, in all men, in all creatures, and in all the

workings of Providence. For just as the worth of a building depends primarily on the solidity of its foundation, so our whole spiritual edifice rests on our Faith. Unless a Religious labors to lead a life of faith, a life every moment of which is animated and energized by Faith,—not governed by natural likes and dislikes, not shaped by foolish whims and impulses,—he will ever be in danger of losing his Vocation.

Lastly, let us ponder on the goodness of Jesus towards Mary Magdalen, when He told her, “Go in peace.” For the words of God effect what they signify, and the peace of the Lord surpasses all understanding. On each of us and on every sinner, our Adorable Savior longs to bestow the same favor. But we are incapable of receiving it in all its fulness, until with Mary Magdalen we deeply humble ourselves in acknowledging our faults and completely cancel them by tears of intense contrition and acts of ardent penance.

Colloquies with St. Mary Magdalen, and with our Divine Savior. We will beg this Holy Penitent to obtain for us the grace of never ceasing to shed tears and do penance for our many sins, of eagerly availing ourselves of every opportunity to humble our pride and mortify our senses, and of employing each moment of our existence to accumulate at the feet of Jesus the practical tokens of our love. Then we will, after her example, prostrate ourselves before our Adorable Master and implore Him, by all He has done and endured for us, to render also us deserving of His complete pardon and to grant us likewise the favor of accompanying Him daily, through the whole course of His bitter Passion, even to His Death on the Cross.—Our Father.

THE THREE DEGREES OF HUMILITY

Introductory Remarks.—In this Exercise St. Ignatius puts before us the only really safe disposition for ever acting, henceforth, in full accordance with the Holy Will of God, and no longer being led astray by the impulse of passion or by the cunning of Satan. This disposition, which he calls the Third Degree of Humility, he shows to consist in a fixed determination to imitate as closely as possible Jesus Christ Crucified; and his main purpose is to make us strive, by prayer and practice, for the acquisition of so momentous a grace. This magnanimous disposition, in fact, embraces all that is most perfect; it embodies the genuine doctrine of the Saints; and it marks the climax of the Spiritual Exercises.

Throughout this Meditation, Humility is considered, not as a passing act, but as a habitual disposition, a supernatural virtue, in three successive stages of development, initial, advanced, and final. Inasmuch as every habit, whether good or bad, may be more or less firm, it goes without saying that each of these three phases, modes, or Degrees of Humility, admits of an unlimited number of gradations.

Another point to be noted is this. Since Humility is by definition a virtue that makes us take our proper place with regard to God and whatever represents God, it consequently causes us to shape our whole conduct, all our thoughts, desires, and actions, in perfect conformity with the Divine Will, as manifested by Commandments, Superiors, Rules, Circumstances,

and Inspirations; nay, more than this, it renders us docile even in the smallest details to the Teachings of Christ our Lord, and eager as far as possible to resemble Him, our Adorable Savior, in His privations, humiliations, and sufferings. Now, in explaining the Three Degrees of Humility, St. Ignatius takes the virtue, not in its primary sense, but in this secondary or derived meaning.

Evidently, it is only after one has acquired to some extent the more obvious and less difficult Degrees of Humility, that he can begin to appreciate and practise the highest Degree, which verily transforms the soul into a living image of Jesus Crucified. But since Religious, by the grace of God, are resolved to strive after real Holiness, and by the Vows have entered the State of Perfection, they are without exception positively called to this Third Degree of Humility.

Subject of this Meditation.—The Three Degrees of Humility.

Composition of Place.—Myself standing before God our Lord and all His Saints, in order that I may know and desire what is most acceptable to His Sovereign Goodness.

Petition.—Light to understand thoroughly and strength to practise generously the doctrine of the Saints, as contained in the Third Degree of Humility.

First Point. In What the Three Degrees of Humility Consist.

“The First Degree of Humility,” says St. Ignatius, “is necessary for eternal salvation. It consists in

humbling myself to obey in all things the law of God our Lord, so that, even to secure the possession of this whole earth or to save my own temporal life, I would not enter into deliberation about breaking a commandment that binds me under mortal sin."

This disposition implies an intense abhorrence of Mortal Sin, such as ought to have been conceived in the First Week and confirmed all along in the Second. But even so, a person in this First Degree of Humility being mainly actuated by the fear of Hell, may sometimes give way under the onset of passion or the stress of temptation, and hence, unless he strives to advance to something higher, his Salvation still remains very uncertain. As yet he has acquired only the lowest degree of spiritual poverty and obscurity.

"The Second Degree of Humility," says St. Ignatius, "consists in my being no more inclined towards riches than towards poverty, nor more intent on honor than on dishonor, nor more desirous of a long life than of an early death, as long as the service of God our Lord and the salvation of my immortal soul are equal; so that I would never enter into deliberation about committing a venial sin, not even for the sake of the whole world or for the avoidance of a most painful and shameful end."

This disposition evidently supposes that one has so completely mortified his unruly passions as to be totally Indifferent to plenty or privation, to esteem or contempt, to health or sickness, and so forth; in other words, that one has humbled himself so thoroughly and conformed himself so entirely to the Holy Will of God, as habitually to shun every Inordination and effectually to minimize the danger of Venial Sin. It is this horror of Venial Sin and Positive Inordination which we labored to obtain already in the

First Week and afterwards strove to intensify throughout the Second Week. Evidently, this Second Degree of Humility postulates a correspondingly high degree of spiritual poverty and obscurity, and indicates a considerable progress towards real Holiness. The main motive is no longer fear but justice, the desire of Perfection. Yet, owing to our extreme weakness and fickleness, even this Second Degree by no means eliminates all uncertainty of Salvation; and hence we eagerly pass on to the consideration of something still more noble and arduous.

"The Third Degree of Humility," says St. Ignatius, "is the most perfect. Including the First and Second Degrees, it consists in my being habitually so disposed that, whenever equal praise and glory will accrue to the Divine Majesty, in order to imitate more closely Christ our Lord and to become actually more like to Him, I desire and embrace poverty and contempt, with Christ poor and condemned for my sake, rather than riches and honors, and I choose to be deemed useless and foolish in this world for the love of Christ, Who was first held to be such on my account, rather than to be considered wise and prudent."

Here we view the very summit of Evangelical Perfection: "If you will be perfect, take up your cross daily and come follow Me." Here we also discover the highest degree of spiritual poverty and obscurity. Humility seems now only another aspect of Charity. For the predominant motive by which a soul is sustained in the practice of this Third Degree is an ardent personal love of Christ Crucified. In order to become like to Her Adorable Lover, she longs to share in His hunger, His thirst, His vigils, His fatigues, His torments, His insults, His abandonment, and His

death, provided only she does not go counter to the Divine Will. Nothing can keep her from embracing on every occasion the Cross of Suffering and Contempt except the knowledge that such a course would be detrimental to the Glory of her Savior and her God.

However, though the strongest impulse is supplied by love, other motives are by no means excluded. Hence, in our endeavors to acquire the Third Degree of Humility, we may be greatly assisted by the desire of canceling our debt of temporal punishment, of destroying the moral stains left on our souls by past sins, of becoming efficient instruments in saving and sanctifying our neighbor; for thus also, surely, we shall better imitate Christ our Lord and more closely resemble Him in His innocence, His Holiness, and His Zeal.

Second Point. How the Successive Degrees of Humility are Mutually Related.

We may begin by asking ourselves what would be the import of the Zero Degree of Humility. It would denote the state of a soul in which the cravings for riches, pleasures, and honors, hold absolute sway, without any fear of God, or any sense of duty, or any love of Christ, to keep them within bounds. This, therefore, is the Degree of the Genuine Worldling; whose every thought and desire is bent on self-indulgence and self-worship; whose heart is wholly taken up with food and drink, exercise and amusement, business and sport, politics and intrigues. Is my habitual condition in any way similar to this?

In the First Degree, the unruly tendencies that spring from our fallen condition, though not yet completely controlled, are already somewhat checked by reason and faith. Hence, in this state of the soul,

mortal sin, but not venial, is at least habitually excluded. It is, consequently, more or less the Degree of the Ordinary Christian.

In the Second Degree, the earthly inclinations of our corrupt nature are exactly counterbalanced by the opposite effects of supernatural grace. The soul, therefore, is theoretically in a moral equilibrium which, as long as it is not disturbed, prevents her from falling into inordination and sin. Practically, no one can keep himself so nicely balanced; but making due allowance for human instability, we may call it the Degree of the Fervent Christian.

Lastly, in the Third Degree, the love of Christ Crucified has taken complete possession of the soul, so that its inordinate leanings towards wealth, enjoyment, and distinction, are now entirely outbalanced by the contrary aspirations to share in the privations, afflictions, and insults of the Son of God. Such a soul is just as eager for opportunities of mortification and humiliation, as the worldling is for occasions of gratifying his sensuality and pride; and hence what is despised and abhorred by the one is esteemed and embraced by the other. "The world is crucified to me and I am crucified to the world." This, evidently, is the Degree of the Saint.

To sum up, then, the Zero Degree is the habitual state of Sin, the First Degree is the habitual state of Grace, the Second Degree is the habitual state of Fervor, and the Third Degree is the habitual state of Heroism.

Third Point. Every Religious Should in dead Earnest Take Up the Practice of the Third Degree of Humility.

The Third Degree is no less appropriate and indis-

pensable for a Religious, than the Crucifix is for a Christian. Just as a Crucifix should not simply be a work of art made for exhibition in a museum, so the Third Degree should not merely be an interesting speculation, a piece of sublime perfection reserved for Canonized Saints. To look upon the Third Degree of Humility as something fanciful, visionary, or ideal, not intended to be practised and mastered by the chosen followers of Christ our King, by those who have embraced the Evangelical Counsels, would stand on a par with removing the Crucifix from the churches, schools, and homes, as was done by the so-called Reformed Christians of the sixteenth century. A Religious that does not aim at the Third Degree of Humility is about as shocking an anomaly as a Christian that does not cherish the Image of his Crucified Savior.

Let it be clearly understood, however, that there is no question of longing for poverty, obscurity, pain, and contempt in themselves, or of praying for afflictions and humiliations for their own sakes. In fact, this would hardly be possible, since we cannot desire what we actually fear and shun; but even if it were possible, there would be neither profit nor merit in such unnatural self-hatred. But we should long and pray for these things, inasmuch as Christ our Lord bore them for love of us and on our account. As such we should eagerly embrace them in spirit; yet even then we have no business to embrace them in reality, unless they come to us through Holy Obedience, from Divine Providence, or with the recommendation and approval of our Rules, Customs, or Confessors.

Again, it is very needful in this matter, to set aside all fictitious pictures and empty fears. When we pray for temporal favors, do we expect that God will

right away lavish on us all the wealth of the world? Of course not. In fact, we always pray to Him with the implicit condition, "as far as it may promote our real well-being" or "provided it will tend to Thy greater glory." Hence we must not imagine that in consequence of our prayer for suffering and contempt, God will suddenly overwhelm us with an avalanche of affliction. Since to suffer with Christ and for Christ is the greatest of all blessings, the most precious of all favors, we may, on the one hand, rest assured that it will be bestowed upon us only in a limited measure, and that we shall have to correspond earnestly and pray ardently before we get any more. On the other hand, we must remember that "God is faithful." In His fatherly Love and tender Solitude, He will never allow any hardship to befall us, without giving us also abundant grace to bear it patiently and generously.

However, there remains the stern fact that heaven can be gained only at the price of affliction and humiliation. Hence, if it is no presumption for a sick person to beg for a distasteful remedy or to request a painful operation, then it is no presumption for a Religious, or even for a Christian, to pray for suffering and contempt. All mankind may be considered as represented on Calvary by the two criminals that were crucified together with our Lord. Suffer in this world we must, with Jesus on the Cross, either to His right or to His left. Unfortunately, to many men the indispensable trials of their earthly existence come as dreadful calamities; and not a few, having utterly neglected to make the necessary preparation, bear them reluctantly and sinfully. But to humble and fervent souls, these same trials come as the extraordinary distinctions, the loving caresses of their

Heavenly Spouse, which fill them with the deepest peace and the sweetest happiness.

"The Following of Christ" inculcates on all believers the necessity of embracing the Cross. "This sign of the Cross shall appear in the heavens when the Lord will come to judge the world. Then all the servants of the Cross who in their lifetime have conformed themselves to the Crucified, shall draw near to Christ, their Judge, with great confidence. Why, then, are you afraid to take up that Cross by which alone you can gain the supernal kingdom? If you look to yourself you can do nothing of the sort, but if you trust in the Lord strength will be given you from Heaven. In the Cross there is salvation and life; in the Cross there is sweetness, strength, and joy; in the Cross there is sterling virtue and perfect happiness. Take up, therefore, your Cross after Jesus, and you shall enter into everlasting life. He has gone before you laden with His Cross, and for you He has died on the Cross, that you in turn might carry your Cross and might long to die on the Cross. If you die with Him, you shall also live with Him; and if you are His companion in suffering, you shall likewise be His companion in glory. There is no other road to eternal life or to inward peace than the road of the holy Cross, the road of daily self-denial."

Indeed, it is difficult to see how any person can truly love Christ our Lord without sincerely wishing and ardently praying to suffer with Him and for Him. What does love mean except assimilation? and what instrument of assimilation between God and man does this sinful earth supply except the Cross? If I realize who I am, an iniquitous wretch, and Who Christ is, the All-Holy Creator, how could I ever cease longing and striving to be treated and afflicted after the

manner He was treated and afflicted, for love of me and in expiation of my numerous offenses committed precisely against Him? Suppose I had a dear friend, lying dangerously ill and suffering excruciating pain, or unjustly cast into prison and inhumanly tortured, could I meanwhile go and enjoy myself? But if he should undergo all those afflictions through my fault, and to ward off from me the just punishment of my odious crimes, perpetrated against his own fair name, against his very life, and I had still left in me any remnant of gratitude, one spark of human affection, what else could I do but spend night and day in tears and groans, without food or drink, amid every kind of discomfort and every mark of contempt? Yet, in the actual case, we have not two human beings more or less equal, but the Lord of Infinite Majesty and a mere sinful nothing.

Therefore, if we really wish to advance in the love of Jesus, our God and Savior, let us with great sincerity and confidence resolve to strive for the Third Degree of Humility, for the grace of participating in His Cross. Union with Christ Crucified is the ultimate goal of our earthly Vocation, the highest form of devotion to the Sacred Heart, the means most conducive to the Divine Glory, the indispensable preparation for a truly efficacious Apostolate, and the most hopeful sign of eternal Predestination. It leads to the summit of holiness, it imparts a truly divine likeness, it is akin to a confirmation in grace, in short, it is the most admirable gift with which a soul can be enriched here below. Once we have made the firm resolution to secure so priceless a grace, two kinds of acts will infallibly lead us to this loving conformity with Jesus, the Son of God: Prayer and Practice.

In the first place, we must earnestly and persist-

ently beg for hardship and contempt in accordance with Divine Providence, that thus we may be rendered more like to our Adorable Master, Who willingly bore even the most bitter ingratitude and the most revolting injustice and the most cruel torments and the most shameful outrages for love of us, in our behalf and on our account. In the next place, we must strive to accept joyfully, for the sake of Jesus, every opportunity of mortification and humiliation, such as hunger and thirst, heat and cold, ailments and accidents, reproofs and penances, disappointments and misunderstandings, slights and insults, or anything else from which we naturally shrink and flee, whether it come to us in the observance of our Rules or the discharge of our Duties, through the disposal of our Lord or the action of our Superior, from the thoughtlessness of our fellow Religious or the malice of our Enemies. And if our repugnance seems too strong to master, we must not cease imploring the help of grace till we are heard.

After this manner, by dint of prayer and practice, in spite of many failures, and notwithstanding our utter weakness, we shall gradually advance towards that mystic union with Christ on the Cross, in which consists the Third Degree of Humility. Oh, may the love of Jesus Crucified soon so inflame our hearts as to enable us to exclaim with the Saints, "Either suffering or death!" or rather, "Not death, but suffering!"

This, then, is to be our program for the future; but, as to the past, we should stir up in our hearts feelings of lively confusion and deep regret for having misused so many valuable opportunities of sharing in the Cross, when we were impatient under affliction or resentful under humiliation. We should also examine whether we have sincerely forgiven all those

who were in any way the cause of these trials, and whether we are now animated towards them, precisely for that reason, by heartfelt gratitude, often beseeching God our Lord to shower down upon them in return His choicest gifts and graces.

Triple Colloquy.—At the conclusion of this important Exercise, St. Ignatius advises us again to address a triple Colloquy to the Blessed Virgin, to Christ our Redeemer, and to the Eternal Father. Let us make it with the utmost fervor and generosity of which we may be capable under the action of the Holy Spirit, remembering that the Third Degree of Humility is the most precious grace with which the soul can be enriched during her probation for Heaven. First, we will implore this singular favor from Mary, the Mother of Sorrows, who, standing under the Cross of Calvary, shared in the torments and disgrace of her Divine Son more than any other person ever could. Then, we will conjure Jesus, our Adorable Savior, through the infinite merits of His Passion and Death, to transform our souls so completely by the love of the Cross that they may be numbered among His Spouses. Lastly, prostrating ourselves before the throne of our Heavenly Father, we will beseech Him that, by His all-powerful grace, we may daily immolate ourselves for the sake of His Well-Beloved Son, Who bore the unspeakable agony of crucifixion for love of us and on account of our sins.—Hail Mary. Anima Christi. Our Father.

THE HOLY EUCHARIST

Emmanuel, God-with-us, that is the Holy Eucharist. Hence it is the life and center of the Catholic Church, the sum and substance of the Christian Religion, the pledge and prelude of the everlasting Bliss of Heaven.

The Real Presence.

Who is present in this tabernacle? Jesus Christ, the Second Person of the Ever-Blessed Trinity, true God and true Man, born at Bethlehem some nineteen hundred and twenty years ago, of the Immaculate Virgin Mary. He is present here with that very Body which was scourged and crucified for my sins, with that same Blood which was shed for love of me on Calvary, with that identical Soul which was crushed under intolerable anguish in the garden of Gethsemane, with that incommunicable Personality which is ever receiving the loving adoration of myriads of celestial Spirits. Again, Who is here? My Creator and my Redeemer, my Sovereign Lord and my Supreme Judge, my Heavenly King and my Eternal Spouse; hidden under the appearances of bread; His Sacred Humanity being present, after the manner our soul is in the body, whole and entire in every part of the consecrated Host.

I do not understand this; but I know it to be a fact with far greater certainty than if I grasped it fully with my own mind, because I believe it on the word of God Himself, conveyed to me by His Holy, Apostolic,

and Infallible Church. But do I exert myself to realize this wonderful mystery; do I strive to bring home to myself what my faith teaches, so that this supernatural conviction may sanctify my entire conduct and inflame my soul with the most ardent devotion? In particular, do I recognize how it is His personal love for me that causes Him to abide here with me in the tabernacle?

I am, then, continually living under the same roof with the Lord of Infinite Majesty and Holiness. What a privilege! This is truly the House of God, not merely inasmuch as it is dedicated to His special Service, not simply because it is owned by nobody else than His supreme Vicar, but also, in the far truer sense, that He has fixed here His personal and permanent Abode. How pure and holy ought to be this House of God, how carefully we ought to shun every sin, every inordination even, in the immediate presence of this infinitely Perfect and Loving Master! How can we presume to profane these Sacred Precincts, to insult this most Gracious Guest, by yielding voluntarily to our base inclinations, to self-love, self-complacency, faultfinding, envy, impatience, sensuality, or sloth? Oh, how much more hateful and shameful sin appears in a Religious, living as he does night and day in the actual company of this Adorable Friend, to Whom he has sworn everlasting fidelity! Is this the way we repay the measureless love and ineffable condescension of our Great God? If our passions are strong and our temptations importunate, is He not here purposely to assist us in our trials, to defend us against our assailants, and to give us the victory over all our enemies?

It is plain that the more intense our inward appreciation is of the Real Presence, the more Profound

also will be our outward reverence in the chapel and sacristy near the Adorable Sacrament, the more diligent our care of whatever pertains to the Eucharistic Worship, and the more exact our observance of all Liturgical Prescriptions. Everything on or about the altar should be kept scrupulously neat and clean. Faded or wilted flowers should be promptly removed, even if no fresh ones can be supplied. In adorning the sanctuary we should avoid whatever savors of gaudiness or display and rather strive to combine grave simplicity with substantial grandeur. While lighted candles may be discreetly used for the purpose of ornamentation, electric lamps should not be installed except to satisfy the need of illumination; and anything that would smack of the theater is to be rigorously eliminated. Also in the matter of music and singing, the authoritative directions of the Holy See should be punctually and energetically carried out. It is sheer folly to think ourselves obedient, as long as, under any pretext whatever, we fail to comply with the express wishes, nay, the positive injunctions of the Sovereign Pontiff. Where there is a will there is a way. Even if we cannot immediately carry out every prescription to the letter, we should at least make a start by doing all we can.

Visits to the Blessed Sacrament.

We do believe in the Real Presence; yet such is our lukewarmness, our ingratitude, that it is too much for us to take now and then a few minutes from our favorite occupations, in order to go to this Loving Master and expose to Him our many miseries and obtain from Him the countless graces He is so desirous of pouring out upon our souls. Some Religious have plenty of time for taking exercise, for recreative

reading, for unnecessary conversation; in fact, they have time for almost anything and everything except for making now and then an extra visit to our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament. When they were as yet only novices, they would hardly let an hour pass without offering some little tribute of homage and love to Jesus in the Holy Eucharist. But now, after so many years replete with signal favors, they dispense themselves even from the ordinary Visits under the flimsiest pretexts.

Have we at least settled on a certain number of extra Visits? At what hours of the day? And are we faithful to these resolutions? Again, when in bodily suffering, in mental distress, or in spiritual desolation, do we ever think of having special recourse to our Heavenly Physician, our Divine Consoler? Oh! to think of the pain we give Him by this coldness and forgetfulness! Let us not measure the fathomless love of Jesus by our own shallow affection. His Sacred Heart is ever consumed with an unspeakable longing for our happiness here no less than hereafter. But He knows that happiness is inseparable from holiness. It is because He wants us to be happy, constantly happy, intensely happy, that He desires to make us holy and yearns for us to come to Him, the Only Source of all Holiness and Happiness.

But even at the ordinary Visits, made in common, how many distractions we indulge in and how little we seem to appreciate the Divine Presence! Those few precious moments, during which we might treasure up so much light and strength, so much solid consolation and heavenly joy, pass not seldom like a dream, and it is only when we get up from our knees that we realize where we are. Alas! could we but realize our loss! Is not our behavior sometimes such

that it might be justly considered a worthless piece of routine, an act of sham adoration, a cruel insult? O infinite patience and meekness of the Heart of our Savior and our God! How is it that Jesus can tolerate all this from those who have come purposely to live with Him and to draw others to His service, from those who for years already profess themselves His faithful followers and devoted companions? Can we not possibly find some efficacious means, can we not adopt some suitable method, to prevent such unbecoming conduct for the future? Why can we not do like many other Religious who, despite very distracting occupations, succeed in keeping up their fervor? The very ornaments with which the ritual of the Church and the piety of the Faithful honors the Real Presence—the sanctuary lamp, the burning tapers, the lilies, roses, and asters, the golden monstrance—will readily suggest holy thoughts and ardent aspirations. But no means nor method will prove of any lasting benefit, unless we cherish a personal love for Jesus in the Holy Eucharist. Love is the only infallible remedy. And genuine Love springs from a lively Faith.

Personal love for Jesus in the Holy Eucharist will also urge us to make frequent acts of Reparation, for the shameful neglect and irreverence, yea, the horrible blasphemies and sacrileges, with which men requite His boundless Mercy and outrage His sovereign Majesty. In imitation of St. Margaret Mary, many Religious spend an hour every Thursday night, in adoration, supplication, and thanksgiving, before the Silent Tabernacle. In some Convents where the Holy Hour is made in common every week, the members, by their faultless attitude and their manifest fervor during the entire exercise, seem to vie with one another in

offering to the Sacred Heart of Jesus this tribute of their tender devotion which He is wont to reward so liberally with supernatural favors. In other Communities, the Holy Hour is made every day of the week by one or more subjects in turn, who either have been assigned for this angelic task or have volunteered for it as a spiritual recreation. Or else each Religious, with the necessary approval, selects some particular time to render to our Lord this homage of sympathy and gratitude, thus drawing down upon himself and his Brothers a multitude of heavenly blessings.

Holy Communion.

Our Divine Lord instituted the Blessed Sacrament not only to remain with us till the end of time, but also to renew, day after day and hour after hour, the holocaust He made of Himself on the Cross. This is another privilege of the Religious Life, to be able to assist every day at Holy Mass. Truly, an inestimable privilege! For what is the Mass but the same offering that was made on Mount Calvary, of the same Victim and by the same Priest, Jesus Christ, the Incarnate Son of God? By His death on the Cross, our Lord merited infinite grace for all mankind, and this grace is applied to us individually in the Mass, especially through Holy Communion.

After we, during the Eucharistic Sacrifice, have consecrated ourselves anew through Jesus, our Priest and our Victim, to God, our Heavenly Father, He in turn longs to communicate Himself to us through Jesus, His Well-Beloved Son, in order that our sacrificial union with our Adorable Savior may be more and more actuated and confirmed. For the Most-High can never be outdone in liberality. As if His

love could brook no delay, in token and in pledge of that fuller donation which He intends to make of Himself in Heaven, and through which we shall share in His own bliss and glory, He deigns to give Himself to us even now in Holy Communion. In the simple words of the liturgy, "The Bread of the blessed Angels has become the Food of mortal Wayfarers. O wondrous fact! The poor and lowly servant feasts on his Lord."

Our soul, then, is fed, so to speak, by Him Who becomes corporally present within us, our Adorable Savior. Just as common bread repairs, supports, and energizes the body, so this Heavenly Food, when received in due dispositions, refreshes, sustains, and inflames the soul, that is, the supernatural life of the soul, Sanctifying Grace. And as bread is transformed into our organism, so we are transformed into Christ, the less noble into the more Noble. Transformed into Christ, so that we live by Him, inasmuch as by mutual love He abides in us and we abide in Him, His Will being our only pleasure and our will no other than His.

This spiritual transformation manifests itself by two special effects. One of these is to lessen and deaden in us that most dangerous inclination, the cause of all our misery and corruption, namely, our inordinate self-love and self-esteem, that monstrous pride which continually prompts us to rebel against God and to trample on our neighbor, that deep-rooted egoism which even here on earth can make our life a veritable hell. Accordingly, Holy Communion subdues the fire of concupiscence, checks the violence of temptation, restrains the power of the demons, cures the weakness of the will, and even washes away venial sin. This effect is the healing grace of the Blessed

Eucharist. But there is another effect equally marked, which has been called its cheering grace and makes the soul break forth in vigorous and ardent acts of charity. Who is there amongst us that has not sometimes experienced this sudden outburst of fervor after a meditation full of aridity and drowsiness? Both these effects, however, depend for their intensity on the earnestness with which we prepare to receive our Divine Guest, on our recollection of mind, on our detestation of sin, and on our detachment from creatures. In other words, the fruit we derive from the reception of this Adorable Sacrament is proportionate to the excellence of the dispositions that we bring to the Altar.

How great, then, should be our solicitude in preparing for Holy Communion, both overnight and in the morning! Before closing our eyes in sleep, we should call to mind once more the immense happiness, the priceless favor, that again awaits us so soon, and anticipate with ardent desire the hour of rising. On awaking during the night our hearts should at once go back to our Adorable Prisoner, Whose Sacred Heart is ever pleading for us with the most tender affection and the most urgent supplication. And in the morning, from the instant we hear the sound of the bell, rising immediately as at the voice of our Beloved, we should entertain no thought and harbor no wish, except to consecrate ourselves wholly to the service of our Divine Master, faithful to our resolution of living and laboring and suffering, only for love of Him, every moment of the day. This is of the highest importance if we want to make a fervent and fruitful Communion; namely, to banish promptly and peremptorily all projects and recollections, all apprehensions and regrets, from the time we awake till we

have concluded our thanksgiving after Mass. On the other hand, how diligent we should be in renewing our determination to practise our Particular Examen, how careful in observing all the so-called Additions, how energetic in applying our mind and heart to our Meditation, and how eager to assist at the Adorable Sacrifice!

And all the while, how we should long and sigh for the coming of our Dearest Lord, our Only Love! Yes, our Only Love, for this we have firmly settled long ago and forever, that Jesus shall be our Only Love, and that we will not love creatures, ourselves included, except for Him and in Him. But as the blessed moment draws near, oh! how fervently we shall repeat our humble protest that we will never in the least transgress any of the Commandments, never violate any of our Rules, never discard any wish of our Superiors, never neglect any of our Resolutions, never hesitate one second to make any sacrifice that may be acceptable to Him.

Not content, however, with our own weak endeavors, we shall beseech our holy Patrons and all the glorious Saints, implore our Guardian Angel with the other Blissful Spirits, and conjure our Heavenly Mother Mary, to come to our assistance, to join their burning supplications to our lukewarm prayers, to communicate to our hearts some of that profound humility and consuming love which unites them so intimately and so inseparably to God our Lord, to Jesus our Adorable Guest. Oh! could we but share in those perfect dispositions with which she, the Immaculate Virgin, awaited the coming of her Son and her Savior in the Holy Communion. With what modest gravity and intense devotion we would approach the altar, and how we would annihilate our-

selves, as it were in adoration and love, at the moment He deigns to enter our wretched hearts. Thus we should strive to make every Communion as if it were both our first and our last, each time receiving our Divine Spouse with such contrition, gratitude, and affection, as to make up, in some degree, for all our past distractedness, tepidity, and irreverence.

But as soon as we possess Him, let us adore and love and thank with if possible still greater fervor, in compliance with the promptings of our holy faith. O moments of ineffable peace and happiness when Jesus is actually reposing on our heart! How is it that our breast is not all on fire with heavenly love? How is it that our strength does not give way under the stress of purest emotion? How is it that our spirit, nourished with the Adorable Body of Christ, does not burst forth from its prison to behold without veil or shadow its Eternal Spouse and to possess forever its Sovereign Good? Is there anything we can refuse Him, now that He has deigned to admit us to His sweet embrace? What duty of Obedience however toilsome, what service of Charity however lowly, what act of Self-Denial however painful, shall we not gladly perform, if it be acceptable to His Sacred Heart. And again, is there anything He can refuse us, now that He has lowered Himself so infinitely as to descend into our soul, that soul yet so terribly disfigured in consequence of its former habits of inordination and sin? "Ask and you shall receive," He says to us in accents of the tenderest love, "that your joy may be full." With what confidence, therefore, we ought to beg for even the greatest favors whilst we actually harbor in our bosom the Lord of Infinite Majesty.

But while ever ready to follow the motion of grace,

we should nevertheless have some simple method to spend these precious minutes of sacramental union with our Adorable Master, in a manner most conducive to His glory and our sanctification. In other words, we should be thoroughly familiar with a number of acts by which our soul can properly express her appreciation for the visit of so great a Guest. They should be made, not with the lips, but rather with the heart; and if we find in them anywhere sufficient matter to occupy us in sweet converse with our Heavenly Spouse, let us delay there till we are fully satisfied. Acts of faith and adoration, of hope and gladness, of love and consecration, of contrition and reparation; acts of gratitude also, inviting once more our Immaculate Mother Mary, the Blessed Joseph, our Holy Angel and Patron Saints, and the whole Court of Heaven, to help us in rendering thanks to our Divine Lord for His incomparable mercy; and lastly, acts of petition, recommending to His Sacred Heart, not only ourselves, but also our Superiors and fellow Religious; our relatives, friends, and charges; the parish and its Pastor; the diocese, the clergy, and the Bishop; the universal Church and especially our Holy Father the Pope; the conversion of sinners, the return of our separated brethren, the cessation of persecution, the success of foreign missions, the relief of the Souls in Purgatory. Some method like this may often prove very useful, yet we should never adhere to it so rigidly as to hamper or destroy the action of grace. It is an instrument that ought to be laid aside as soon as it ceases to be serviceable.

Provided we are in the state of grace, have the right intention, that is, a supernatural motive, and are in earnest about making a devout preparation and a suitable thanksgiving, we should strive to communicate

every day. The decree "Sacra Tridentina Synodus" teaches explicitly that this is the ardent desire of Jesus Christ and His Church with regard to all the faithful who have come to the use of reason. However, as stated in the same decree, they should not make use of Frequent or Daily Communion without consulting their Confessor, whose evident duty it is to ascertain whether they are animated by the right intention. Doubtfully grievous sins, strictly speaking, do not take away our liberty to approach the Holy Table. As to admixture of other motives, the question is which one determines our choice, the natural or the supernatural. Communicating chiefly from a natural motive, such as human respect, routine, sensible sweetness, or temporal favor, constitutes a venial sin of irreverence and is not likely to produce much good.

Frequent Communion, especially Daily Communion, should make us gradually advance, by rendering us more vigilant and prayerful, more obedient and charitable, more patient, humble, and mortified. On the other hand, it should gradually diminish our venial faults, at least those which are fully deliberate, and intensify our detestation of sin. If, on the contrary, we grow more careless and more irreverential; if our preparation becomes less devout and our thanksgiving less fervent than when we communicated only a few times a week; if we continue to commit the same faults as before with equal or even greater facility and make no serious effort to improve our conduct or to check our evil habits; in other words, if we are living in the state of tepidity and take no means at all to rise from that condition; then there is certainly grave reason for doubting our right intention and for consulting a prudent Confessor.

Bishop Hedley, in "The Holy Eucharist," discusses the case of "good and pious people who are very imperfect," and of "those who, as the Confessor clearly sees, are contracting, through the frequency of their Communion, a habit of irreverence towards our Lord." Arguing from the instructions given by the Holy See in the decree "*Sacra Tridentina Synodus*," the learned author concludes that under such circumstances the Confessor would, as a rule, be fully within his rights, and would only be doing his duty, in preventing daily Communion. Similar views are held by other eminent theologians. Here the question might arise, what would be the result if a tepid Religious persisted in communicating frequently and even daily, without the approval or contrary to the advice of his Confessor. There can be little doubt that he would eventually approach the Holy Table in the state of mortal sin, and thus "eat and drink judgment to himself, not discerning the Body of the Lord."

We should make a great deal of the prescriptions of the Ritual for the administration of Holy Communion, and realize the meaning of the Latin formulas. For the surest means to obtain solid devotion is to follow the guidance of the Church. Do we sincerely acknowledge our manifold guilt during the recitation of the Confiteor? Do we receive with contrite and grateful hearts the general absolution imparted by the Priest? Do we adore in faith and love when he lifts up the Blessed Sacrament and says, "Behold the Lamb of God, behold Him Who takes away the sins of the world"? And do we make our own that threefold protestation of humility and confidence: "Lord, I am not worthy that Thou shouldst come under my roof, but only speak the word and my soul shall be healed"? It is also advisable during time of Retreat

to examine whether we still follow the proper manner of receiving the Sacred Host. To put it briefly: we should hold the cloth or plate horizontally, raise our head somewhat according to circumstances, close our eyes, open our mouth sufficiently to allow the tongue to rest on the lower lip, and avoid moving our head suddenly forward towards the Priest's hand or drawing our tongue back too hastily.

St. Aloysius, being allowed as a rule to communicate only on Sundays, used to devote the first three days of the week to thanksgiving and the last three days to preparation. Since we are incomparably more privileged in being permitted daily Communion, we should strive to keep thinking of our Adorable Visitor, with humble and loving gratitude, all during the morning hours; while during the latter half of the day, amidst our various occupations, we should begin to long and hunger for His next coming. This spiritual appetite evidently constitutes the most obvious and most suitable disposition for the reception of the Holy Eucharist, for the eating of this true Bread from Heaven. But if we desire to relish thoroughly its Divine Sweetness, let us take care to bring to the altar a big bouquet of acts of humiliation and mortification: opportunities of contempt and suffering, diligently sought, joyfully welcomed, and lovingly borne, for the sake of our Crucified Spouse. It is certain that even one Communion, made with all the fervor of which we are capable, may suffice to transform us into real saints and heroic martyrs.

THE LAST SUPPER

Introductory Remarks.—We now enter upon the Third Week of the Exercises. “While excluding joyful thoughts as of the resurrection and of heaven,” says St. Ignatius, “I should strive to excite myself to sorrow, grief, and anguish, frequently recalling to mind the labors and afflictions which Christ our Lord bore from the moment of His birth to the mystery of the passion on which I am going to meditate.” The Sufferings of our Divine Savior form an inexhaustible theme for contemplation, from which we can daily draw the spiritual energy needed to strive after the Third Degree of Humility. It was by reflecting constantly on the Sacred Passion that the Saints found courage to practise on every occasion the most complete self-abnegation. It was by looking up to Christ Crucified that the Martyrs obtained grace to bear with joy their public infamy and horrible torments. Similar trials may await us, trials that involve the loss of comfort, country, liberty, and life. Are we ready for them? We do not know; but, if only we meditate as did the Saints and Martyrs, we too shall come out victorious, however hard the inward conflict or ferocious the outward persecution.

Subject of this Meditation.—At the Last Supper, Christ our Lord washed the feet of His Disciples, gave them His Sacred Body and Precious Blood, and exhorted them to the practice of Fraternal Charity.

Composition of Place.—The supper-room or cenacle on Mount Sion.

Petition.—To feel shame and sorrow because for my sins the Son of God is going to His Passion. This twofold grace will dispose me to meditate afterwards with greater fruit on the principal events of the Passion.

First Point. The Adorable Person of our Lord.

St. Ignatius suggests that when about to meditate on the Passion, we should consider not only what Christ is going to suffer but also what He wishes to suffer in His Sacred Humanity.—“With desire I have desired,” that is, I am consumed with the desire, our Lord said to His Apostles as they were about to begin the legal supper, “to eat this Pasch with you, before I suffer.” And already several months previously He had told them, “There is a baptism with which I am to be baptized and how I am straitened until it be accomplished.” So great was this eagerness of His Sacred Heart that even in the midst of the most cruel torments He was ready to suffer more, if such could have been pleasing to His Heavenly Father or beneficial to us, poor sinners. This, in fact, was the opportunity for which He had been longing ever since the first moment of His Incarnation. This was the precious occasion of manifesting His gratitude to the Adorable Trinity for all the wonderful favors lavished upon Him, as Man, with such incomparable liberality. This was the acceptable hour to satisfy the justice of Almighty God for all the numberless offenses committed by mankind, from the disobedience of our First Parents down to my own Personal Sins. This was the final conflict for delivering His brethren

from the tyranny of Satan, from the slavery of their Passions, from the danger of eternal Damnation; and this was the loving holocaust that would merit for each of us all the graces needed to practise constant Self-Denial and to obtain everlasting Bliss.

It is to this burning zeal of Jesus, my Savior, it is to this vehement longing of His Sacred Heart, that I in particular owe my merciful preservation from the unquenchable flames of Hell—perhaps, even from the horrible guilt of mortal Sin—together with all the heavenly blessings that have enabled me, in spite of my many faults and my excessive weakness, to enter a Religious Institute and to embrace the State of Perfection. Should not, then, also my heart be filled with a sincere desire, with an ardent longing to suffer with Christ and for Christ, in the accomplishment of the Divine Will, in my efforts to advance in sanctity, in my labors for the benefit of my fellow men, in my practice of Prayer, Penance, Charity, and Obedience?

“Consider also,” says St. Ignatius, “how, during the Passion, the Divinity conceals Itself”;—that is, how the Divine Personality, hypostatically united to the Sacred Humanity, could destroy the enemies of Christ, yet does not do so, but on the contrary allows Him to suffer so cruelly. In fact, we fail to notice any manifestation of the Godhead; no miracles, no transfiguration, no not even, perhaps, the habitual majesty in the personal appearance of Christ our Lord, which inspired all who beheld Him with respect and veneration.

Why is it that the Divinity remains hidden after this manner? It is out of delicate regard for the ardent wishes of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. It is to give Him the long desired opportunity of showing

His gratitude towards God and His charity towards sinners. It is also to give men a Supreme Model for their imitation in the trials and hardships of this present life, that they may learn how to thank their Heavenly Father for His Singular Predilection by their loving obedience to His Adorable Will. The intimate union, therefore, which exists between the Divinity and the Humanity in the Person of Christ our Lord, fully explains this temporary concealment.

Accordingly, how completely mistaken we are if in our temptations or tribulations, from whatever source they may arise, we get discouraged and disheartened because God does not immediately and manifestly come to our assistance, either by checking the creatures that afflict us or at least by making us feel His sensible presence. It shows how little we understand the divine way of dealing with souls. Both physical pain and mental distress are not infrequently accompanied by spiritual desolation. If it were otherwise, what merit would there be in bearing suffering and contempt? But God will assuredly send us consolation in His own good time. Meanwhile, concealing Himself, as it were, He enables us by His grace to accept our afflictions with patience and even with joy, and makes us see in them a precious opportunity to atone for our sins, to practise virtue, to accomplish something for the sanctification and salvation of souls, and to acquire another trait of resemblance to our Crucified Redeemer.

Lastly, St. Ignatius bids me consider that Christ is going to suffer all these tortures and all these insults for my Sins, and consequently what I in turn ought to do and to suffer for Him.—Of all the aspects of the Passion this one is the most wonderful, that He, the God of Absolute Holiness, the Lord

of Infinite Majesty, should endure such extremes of pain and anguish and ignominy, in order that I, His rebellious creature, might not be condemned to that everlasting torment and infamy which I had so justly and so often merited by my Iniquities. This surely surpasses all created understanding; this should cause me to die of shame and grief and love. How could I ever bewail and detest my Sins sufficiently? Have I done so in the past? Must I not, at least, begin to do so now? And what labors ought I not to undertake for Him, or rather what afflictions ought I not to bear for Him in return? Is there any duty that could be too burdensome for me, in view of such amazing love? No, indeed; nor can I rest satisfied with mere exertion of body and mind however strenuous; I must repay my Savior by doing penance, I must suffer for Him, and suffer for Him all I can, never saying "Enough!" but even when at its worst exclaiming, "More suffering, O Lord, and more love!"

Second Point. The Actions of our Lord.

Washing of the Feet.—What a wonderful spectacle of humility and love: Jesus Christ, the Son of God, in the attitude of a slave, kneeling at the feet of His Disciples and rendering them this personal service with the tenderest affection. The Almighty Creator washes the feet of His sinful creatures. Oh! if Jesus, my Savior and my God, were to appear before me as He came to each of the twelve Apostles, what would not be my confusion on seeing Him about to perform so loving and lowly a service for a being so wretched and so vile? Would I not exclaim with Peter: "Lord, are You going to wash my feet? You shall never wash my feet"?

Yet this is precisely what our Divine Master does

for me day after day. For who else but God serves me in my manifold helplessness and attends to my numerous needs? It is true, He does so through other men, through my fellow Religious, through my Superiors; but does He, therefore, do it less Himself? Does He not give them the faculty of rendering me service, out of pure affection for me? Besides, does He not really cooperate with them in these acts of humility and charity? Or does He perhaps serve me less, because He deigns to associate with Himself instruments that derive all their usefulness from Him alone, and deigns to employ them not from any deficiency on His part, but from sheer liberality, that they may share in His Divine slavery of love?

Hence, on the one hand, what should not be my interior confusion on receiving such services,—for admit them I must no less than Peter, if I wish to remain in the friendship of our Lord,—and, on the other hand, how eagerly I should seize every opportunity of serving my Companions, my fellow men, while holding myself utterly unworthy of such an honor. Indeed, how Divine it is to serve and how Human it is to be served. To serve is the privilege of those who are endowed with strength and goodness, to be served is the lot of the weak and the helpless.

Both mutual service and self-help should be among the most striking features of every Religious Community. Do I take care not to request more assistance than really necessary? Again, does my daily conduct show forth my conviction that whatever gifts have been bestowed upon me by God, are to be used, not simply for my own private benefit, but more especially for the service of my Brethren? “I have given you an example,” said our Adorable Savior after performing His lowly task, “that as I have done

to you, so you do also. If then I being your Lord and Master have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet." Humility, humility! when shall I grasp its paramount importance; when shall I give myself to its steady and earnest practice?

Institution of the Holy Eucharist.—"Jesus knowing that His hour was come to pass out of this world," says St. John, "having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them unto the end"; that is, He gave them a special token of the tenderest affection. In fact, at the Institution of the Holy Eucharist, Jesus showed that He loved us so as to exhaust for our consolation the resources of His infinite Power and so as never, even to the end of the world, to leave us without His Sacred Presence, without His Divine Sacrifice, without His giving Himself for the nourishment of our souls in Holy Communion.

"Greater love than this no man has but that he lay down his life for his friends." Yes, no man can do more than that: but God can; He can give Himself. And this He did precisely when He was about to suffer the most painful and shameful death for our sins. "The Lord Jesus, the same night in which He was betrayed, took bread, and giving thanks, broke it, and said: 'Take and eat: this is My Body which shall be delivered for you.'" During the Sacred Passion the Divinity alone was concealed, but in the Consecrated Host even the Humanity remains hidden. To such fathomless depths of self-abasement Jesus deigned to descend at the Last Supper, in order that we might ever possess Him as our Friend, our Victim, and our Food.

Yet, in that very hour, His Adorable Heart was pierced with grief at the sight of all the black ingratitude, all the fiendish hatred, with which men would

treat Him in this Divine Mystery. How have I till now corresponded to so prodigal a love? What has been my conduct towards our Lord in the Holy Eucharist? How do I prove to Him my devotion at the Sacrifice of the Mass, before and after Communion, at Visits, at Benediction? Again, do I accept and value as a special favor to be entrusted with even the humblest duty about the Chapel? Am I careful in whatever belongs to the cult of the Blessed Sacrament? the altar linen, the sacerdotal vestments, the sanctuary lamp, the candles, the adornments, the music? Am I punctual in the observance of all the rubrics that regard the celebration of Holy Mass, the administration of Holy Communion, and the conduct of Public Worship? Lastly, do I bring home to myself that my Heavenly Spouse has instituted this August Sacrament precisely to enable me to make some return for His Boundless Love by seeking in all things my deepest humiliation and greatest mortification? But if I am still full of imperfections, if I am still enslaved to my likes and dislikes, what other conclusion can I draw than that the grace of the Holy Eucharist has till now remained idle in my soul, because I neglected to correspond to it by generous acts of self-denial and self-abasement?

Third Point. The Words of our Lord.

Our Adorable Savior, after giving the Apostles His own Body and Blood, exhorted them repeatedly to mutual Charity, and then solemnly implored His Heavenly Father to bestow upon them the grace of perfect Union. "I give you a new commandment," He said, "that you love one another, as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this shall all men know that you are My disciples, if you have

love one for another." Again, He said, "This is My commandment that you love one another as I have loved you. Greater love than this no man has than that he lay down his life for his friends. You are My friends, if you do the things that I command you." And lastly, "I pray that they may all be one as Thou, Father, in Me and I in Thee; that they also may be one in Us, so that the world may believe that Thou hast sent Me."

One great obstacle to Fraternal Charity is resentment. In order to love we must be ready to forgive, and in order to forgive we must be willing to forget. Probably every Religious, at some time or other, has experienced uncalled-for opposition, or received unmerited blame, or suffered unkind treatment, either in the world or in the convent, maybe from a Companion, or even from a Superior. If we had been truly humble we should have eagerly welcomed the humiliation and cheerfully endured the trial. But we were not humble; we smarted under the real or fancied injustice of which we were the victims; and deep down in our heart we began to harbor a feeling of bitterness, of aversion, of enmity. Now, such a disposition, if deliberately countenanced, renders us incapable of practising the virtue of Fraternal Charity and exposes us to forfeiting the gift of Sanctifying Grace. For he who loves only his friends is no better than a heathen or a publican, and the unforgiving servant shall eventually be cast into the prison of Hell. To advance in Religious Perfection and, indeed, to safeguard our Eternal Salvation, it is absolutely necessary that we forgive our enemies from the bottom of our soul. But this is impossible unless we exert ourselves never to let our memory dwell on any injuries done to us, except to pray for their authors.

In other words, we must resolve sincerely and strive earnestly and labor perseveringly to forget. As long as we are not determined to forget, we are not disposed to forgive, we are trifling with the grace of Heaven as well as with the friendship of Christ, and we do not belong to the number of His true Disciples.

For, after all, the distinguishing mark of every genuine Christian is this practical imitation of the most Loving Heart of Jesus, the exercise of Fraternal Charity. Consequently, this heavenly virtue should also form the supreme concern and the ceaseless occupation of every fervent Religious. How sincere, then, how tender, how generous, and how untiring should be our mutual affection! What close and constant union there should reign among those who daily receive Jesus, their Divine Spouse, before the same altar and at the same hour, in Holy Communion! Since He has loved each one of us with such unquenchable ardor and such inexhaustible liberality in the Adorable Eucharist, how could we ever think of having done enough for Him in our services for the well-being of our neighbor, in our labors for the conversion of sinners, in our sufferings for the sanctification and salvation of our Brethren?

While, on the one hand, it is plain that precisely in the exercise of Fraternal Charity we shall find ample opportunity of bearing fatigue, hardship, anguish, and contempt for the sake of our Divine Lord; so, on the other hand, it is certain that the more eagerly we embrace poverty, suffering, and humiliation, the more faithfully also we shall comply with this farewell commandment of our Adorable Master: to love one another even as He has loved us, ready to sacrifice not only our convenience and our rest, but our health and our very life, for the good of our fellow men.

Yet we must always bear in mind that the love which consumes the Sacred Heart of Jesus is Apostolic Charity, Zeal for Souls. Let us be on our guard against the common error of mistaking worldly familiarity, sentimental sympathy, or sensual fondness, for supernatural affection. In the midst of our works of mercy, corporal and spiritual, we must never lose sight of our ultimate object: to free men from the slavery of Satan, from the corruption of sin, from the darkness of unbelief, from the seduction of the world, from the danger of everlasting perdition; to bring them to the practice of true and solid virtue on earth and thus to the enjoyment of unending bliss in heaven. Just as in its fervor and sweetness, so also in its purity and nobility, our affection should be regulated by no other than that supreme standard which Christ our Lord deigned to assign, when He commanded us to love one another even as He has loved us.

Colloquy.—"To finish," says St. Ignatius, "with a colloquy to Christ our Lord, and then to say an Our Father. Or if devotion urges me, three colloquies, one to the Mother, another to the Son, and a third to the Father, in the same form as that laid down in the meditation on Two Standards and in the note which follows the meditation on Three Classes of Men." Let us endeavor to pour out our heart in ardent sentiments of humility, contrition, gratitude, and love, as well as in urgent petitions for light and strength on the road of evangelical perfection.

A. M. D. G.

“MY CHILD, GIVE ME YOUR HEART.”

SEVENTH DAY

PATRON: St. Mary Magdalen.

MOTTO: “God forbid that I should glory save in the
Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

SPIRIT: Longing for the evils of this world, hardships and humiliations.

READING: Imitation; Bk. III, C. 7, 19, 46, 50, 56, 57.

Bk. IV, C. 2, 4, 8, 12, 13, 15.

Gospels; St. Matthew, C. 27.

St. John, C. 19.

Strive to confirm all your Resolutions by an ardent personal love of Jesus Crucified, beseeching Him for a share in His affliction and ignominy. Determine the subject of your Particular Examen.

THE AGONY AND THE BETRAYAL

Introductory Remarks.—During this entire third period of the Exercises, and in each successive meditation on the Passion, we should make every effort to obtain the precious grace—that grace which gives the initial impulse toward genuine Sanctity—of desiring and embracing poverty, obscurity, hardships, and humiliations, for the love of Christ Crucified. We should not cease begging and beseeching our Divine Master, through the intercession of our Blessed Mother, till we feel certain that we have been heard, that is, till we are positively resolved, in our innermost heart, to accompany Him on the royal road to Calvary.

To be a Religious, if it means anything at all, means to follow Christ, not in empty words or poetic fancies, but in downright truth and solid reality. By His excessive afflictions He merited for us abundant grace to do so; and, therefore, instead of cowardly shrinking from this glorious task as if above our strength, we should take it up at once with the utmost confidence. Our Lord did not redeem us by His discourses and miracles, but by His Passion and Death; and hence the only thing that will gain Holiness for ourselves and Salvation for our neighbor, is not our energy, or our broadmindedness, or our sociability, but our habitual union with Jesus on the Cross of suffering and contempt, our constant striving after the Third Degree of Humility.

Subject of this Meditation.—After instituting the Holy Eucharist, Christ our Lord went down with His Apostles to the valley of Cedron. On entering an olive grove, called Gethsemane, He left eight of the Disciples near the gate and the remaining three a little further. Then He betook Himself alone to prayer and suffered such anguish as to sweat copious drops of blood. When the hour had come, He went forth to meet Judas, who betrayed Him with a kiss, while the other Apostles fled in various directions. Being arrested like a criminal, our Savior was dragged up the slope of the hill to the palace of the High Priests.

Composition of Place.—The garden of Gethsemane and the road leading up to Mount Sion.

Petition.—To bear suffering with Christ loaded down with suffering, to feel anguish with Christ overwhelmed with anguish, to grieve and weep on account of the terrible afflictions which the Son of God underwent for my sake in the garden of Gethsemane and during the Betrayal.

First Point. The Agony in the Garden of Gethsemane.

Our Blessed Redeemer, after celebrating with His Disciples the Jewish Passover and instituting the Holy Eucharist, spoke that wonderful farewell discourse on our obligation of loving one another even as He has loved us; and then went down to the valley of Cedron. This brook, flowing in a southerly direction below the eastern wall of Jerusalem, separates the hill on which the Temple stood from Mount Olivet. At the foot of this latter hill, right near the gulch

formed by the watercourse, there was an olive grove, where our Lord used to spend part of the night in prayer.

It must have been about ten o'clock when Jesus with His Apostles reached this spot, and the full moon, rising slowly above Mount Olivet, left the garden of Gethsemane partly involved in darkness. Scarcely had Jesus entered the gate, when He allowed himself to be seized upon by a most vehement sense of desolation. "Sit down here," He said to a group of His Disciples, "while I go yonder to pray." And going on with only three of them, Peter, James, and John, He led them under the obscurity of the olive trees toward the farther end of the garden. Never before had these Apostles seen their Beloved Master plunged in such sadness as this; He appeared to be wholly overpowered by terror and dejection. The God-Man paused a moment. "My soul," He groaned, "is sorrowful even unto death. Wait here, watch and pray." Then withdrawing from them about a stone's throw, He sank upon His knees and gradually bowing His head till His brow touched the very earth, "Father," He prayed, "Father, all things are possible to Thee: oh, take this cup away from Me!" And He added, "But Thy will, not Mine, be done."

Several times, after a more or less prolonged interval, He repeated the same prayer in similar terms, till at last, rising with difficulty, He returned to where He had left the three privileged Apostles. In hours of intense affliction it is natural for the human heart to long for the sympathy of a friend. Christ, as a perfect man, now felt this need most keenly. But there was not one friend to watch with Him, not one human heart to sympathize with Him in His bitter distress. Weariness and sorrow had oppressed them

with sleep. "Simon," our Lord said to Peter, "so you are sleeping? Could you then not watch one hour with Me?" And to this gentle reproof He added a loving warning for all: "Watch and pray, that you enter not into temptation. The spirit, indeed, is willing but the flesh is weak." He knew that unless they prayed they would not be prepared for the heavy trial which was to come upon them that very night.

Again He withdrew from them, and casting Himself down in the dust He abandoned Himself once more to this awful agony, while repeating over and over again the same petition as before: "Father, if this cup cannot pass except I drink it, Thy will be done." Christ wished to show us that His human will was perfectly conformed to the will of the Eternal Father, but that in maintaining this conformity He had to overcome His natural repugnance for torture and ignominy. And now that beautiful countenance, the delight of the Blessed Spirits, pale and worn, was moistened with tears; that majestic frame, the glory of manhood, trembled from head to foot, like a broken reed; while through every pore of that innocent Body there issued a sweat of blood, which saturated the garments of the Son of God and trickled down in heavy drops upon the ground. In this extremity Jesus turned to Heaven for help, and an angel was sent to console Him. The Father of mercies did not remove the suffering from His Only-Begotten Son but gave Him strength to bear it.

What was the cause of this overwhelming anguish, this mysterious agony, borne by Christ my Savior? First, the clear foreknowledge He had of the frightful torments and indignities that awaited Him within a few hours; and from this I can gather how excessive they must have been when He suffered them

the next day. Secondly, the number and heinousness of the sins of men, which He had taken upon Himself to expiate by His Passion and Death; and here I should call to mind my own sins, considering how by themselves they would have been sufficient to crush the Sacred Heart of Jesus and yet how little satisfaction I have made for them till now. Thirdly, the obstinacy of almost countless millions of souls who, in spite of His bitter afflictions, in spite of His Boundless Love, would deliberately rush into eternal perdition; but especially the ingratitude of so many Religious, His chosen companions and privileged friends, who would be content to lead lives of lukewarmness and routinism, of inordination and sin. I also was present to my Divine Redeemer in the garden of Gethsemane; but while He was praying I was yielding to indolence, while He was weeping I was indulging in distractions, while He was agonizing I was looking for enjoyment. Yes, I was present to Him; and He offered His mortal anguish to atone for my resistance to the promptings of Grace, for my repugnance to the orders of Superiors, for my remissness in acts of Contrition and practices of Penance.

Second Point. The Betrayal.

It was now near midnight. The full moon, standing high in the heavens, was flooding the valley with her silvery light. The most profound peace reigned over all nature. "Rise, let us go," said Christ to His drowsy Apostles, "for he who will betray Me is at hand." In fact, Judas was actually bringing up the escort placed at his disposal by the High Priests and the Sanhedrin, a veritable mob made up partly of military guards of the Temple under one of their officers, and partly of hired watchmen whose duty it

was to prevent disorder in the city during the night. They were armed with swords and clubs, and provided also with lanterns at the suggestion, it seems, of the traitor. The police were to take charge of the Prisoner, while the soldiers would see to their protection against any violent resistance on the part of His Disciples.

Judas had led the way to the entrance of Gethsemane, intending to surprise the Apostles and not expecting to find himself at once face to face with his Divine Master. But at that very moment, our Lord, going before His three favorite Disciples, reached the spot near the gate where He had left the other eight at the beginning of His Agony. This sudden meeting caused the traitor to become confused; he hastily stepped forward without, perhaps, fully realizing what he was doing, took Jesus by the hands, as was the custom, and kissing Him with feigned affection said in a hollow tone, "Hail, Master."—"Friend," whispered our Lord into his ear, "why are you come?" And gently permitting him to withdraw He added, "Judas, is it with a kiss that you betray the Son of Man?"

Here we see the terrible results of inordination. Judas had started on his downward career when, having charge of the alms contributed for the support of the Apostolic Community, he became gradually attached to money. Now he is so completely blinded and hardened by his passion for wealth that, for the paltry sum of thirty shekels, the price of a slave, he has engaged to deliver his Adorable Master into the hands of the High Priests. Though called to the most sublime apostolate, he had turned the vilest of traitors. Having lost all supernatural faith, hope, and love, the subsequent realization of his foolish and

criminal bargain will only serve to seal his everlasting doom by driving him to a horrible suicide. Have not some Religious Vocations ended in a similar catastrophe! Well may we take to heart the warning words of Christ: "Watch and pray that you enter not into temptation. The spirit, indeed, is willing but the flesh is weak."

Though grieved beyond measure by the base betrayal of Judas, our Lord, calm and majestic, advanced a few steps to meet His enemies. "Whom do you seek?" He asked in a clear voice. They gruffly answered: "Jesus of Nazareth."—"I am He," Christ said; and, to prove that His surrender was voluntary, He permitted a ray of His divine glory to manifest itself from His Sacred Person. The moment His words reached their ears, they were overmastered by a mysterious force and fell backward to the ground, Judas with them. For a few moments they remained as if paralyzed; then they rose up full of wonder and fear, while the traitor tried to sneak away in the crowd. Christ repeated His question: "Whom do you seek?"—"Jesus of Nazareth," they replied in a subdued tone. "I have told you that I am He," our Lord said; "if therefore you seek Me, let these go their way." And so speaking He pointed to His Disciples who were standing huddled together at a little distance, some indignant and angry, others sad and frightened, but all aware that their own lives, as well as that of their Beloved Master, were at stake.

Here we can admire both the irresistible power of our Divine Lord, which He is ever willing to exert if need be in behalf of His servants, and His watchful care for the safety of those faint-hearted Apostles. Hence we should learn that God will never allow us to suffer beyond our weakness, and that, whatever

temptation He may permit to come upon us, He will always provide abundant grace that we may resist and conquer. In the midst of even the severest trials we ought to be full of courage and confidence.

The men now drew near to Jesus and prepared to arrest Him. At this sight some of the Apostles cried out, "Lord, shall we strike?" And without waiting for an answer, Peter rushed up to the crowd and with a random blow cut off the ear of a man called Malchus, who was probably one of the foremost in seizing Jesus. This unexpected display of boldness caused the mob to fall back for a moment, and our Lord took the occasion to calm the excitement of His Disciple. "Let them alone," He said, "and put up again your sword into its scabbard. The chalice which My Father has given Me, shall I not drink it? Do you think that I cannot ask My Father, and He will give Me presently more than twelve legions of Angels?" Then stooping down to Malchus, who was lying in the dust, he restored his ear and healed the wound; while the Apostles abandoned their Divine Master and scattered to escape pursuit.

As the action of Peter had caused some delay, the Priests came up to see what was the matter, and Jesus addressed to them this terrible rebuke: "You are come out, as if I were a robber, with swords and clubs to apprehend Me. I sat among you daily, teaching in the Temple, and you did not lay hands on Me. But this is your hour and the power of darkness." The miserable wretches, however, maddened by their deadly hatred of Jesus, scorned His solemn admonition with a diabolical grin. At the command of their officer, the soldiers surrounded our Lord, and the henchmen of the Sanhedrin bound His hands behind His back; after which they hurried Him off, amid all

manner of abuse, across the torrent and up the steep slope, to the palace of Annas and Caiphas on Mount Sion.

The behavior of the Apostles teaches us the inconstancy, smallness, and selfishness of our own hearts, in contrast with the steadfastness, generosity, and charity of the Sacred Heart of Jesus; while the obduracy of the Priests shows us to what depths of wickedness we may descend, if we fail to check the first motions of ambition, envy, or pride. But our main concern should be, by tender compassion and ardent contrition, by humble endeavor and fervent supplication, to take a real share in the crushing sadness and manifold affliction which our Divine Lord desired to experience in order to ransom us from the thralldom of Hell and bring us to the possession of Heaven.

Third Point. What Christ is Going to Suffer and Wishes to Suffer in His Sacred Humanity.

As this is one of the special points recommended by St. Ignatius to our diligent consideration whenever we meditate on the Passion, let us strive to realize that vehement longing of the Sacred Heart to atone for our rebellion and to restore us to grace, which made our Lord anticipate in the garden of Gethsemane all the tortures and insults He was to suffer the next day at the hands of Jews and Gentiles. Let us likewise bring home to ourselves the holy eagerness with which the Son of God allowed Himself to be apprehended by His enemies like a dangerous impostor, who is taken before the magistrate to be publicly sentenced and punished for his crimes. It was all because of His Measureless Love for us, mere nothings and wretched sinners.

Yet we, far from following our Adorable Savior, far from gladly bearing with Him harsh and contemptuous treatment, how often have we not acted even worse than the simple but timorous Apostles? Full of sympathy, they grieved and wept at seeing their Innocent Master at the mercy of His powerful and pitiless enemies. We, on the contrary, not only refused to accept our little share in the afflictions of Christ our Lord, but even went so far as to drown His very remembrance in the gratification of our sensual appetites. Or did we not know almost before coming to the use of reason what they realized only after the Resurrection, that "this Man was truly the Son of God"? Painful as was to the Heart of Jesus the cowardice of those chosen Disciples, bitter as was to Him the treason of Judas Iscariot, has not our conduct on many occasions been such as to cause yet greater pain and bitterness to this most Affectionate and most Devoted Friend?

And what consolation have we given Him till now to atone for our base ingratitude? Even if we were to shed a flood of tears every day of our life, even if we were moreover to chastise our sinful flesh with every instrument of penance, and to subdue our unruly passions with every practice of mortification, and to afflict our foolish pride with every kind of humiliation, it would all be as nothing in comparison with the countless wrongs we have committed against Him, our Savior and our God. The Apostles ever afterwards spent themselves in unceasing labors, amid innumerable hardships, appalling dangers, and relentless persecution, for the Adorable Name of Jesus; till finally they followed their Divine Master even to prison, to torture, and to death. But where are our works of expiation, what has been our return

of love, during so many years since our conversion from the world? Alas! how perfunctory has been our contrition, how shallow our amendment, how distracted our prayer, how lax our poverty, how imperfect our chastity, how half-hearted our obedience, how defective our observance, how sluggish our zeal, and how cold our charity!

But if such has been our conduct towards Jesus in the past, it certainly shall not remain the same for the future. This we promise Him, while putting our entire trust in those infinite treasures of grace which He purchased for us by His Sacred Passion and Death. From now on we will prove to Him our love, not only by the tears we shall daily shed for our sins and by the satisfaction we shall constantly make for our offenses, but also by joyfully bearing with Him and for Him every opportunity of mortification and humiliation with which He may vouchsafe to honor us as His poor servants and lowly companions.

Colloquy with Jesus in anguish and agony, with Jesus betrayed and abandoned, with Jesus arrested and maltreated, for love of me and on my account; continuing to implore the grace of sharing in His afflictions, till I actually feel that my prayer has been heard.—Our Father.

THE SCOURGING AND THE CROWNING WITH THORNS

Introductory Remarks.—To consolidate the work of our Retreat and to insure the keeping of our Resolutions, there is nothing so helpful as the loving consideration of the Passion of Christ. It is the constant and vivid remembrance of the sufferings borne by the Son of God that has enabled thousands of Religious in every Institute to conquer their rebellious natures, to correct their inordinate habits, to correspond to their lofty Vocation, and to reach the goal of true Holiness. No contrition for past offenses, no purpose of future amendment can be kept alive, unless daily nourished by the thought of Jesus scourged, mocked, and crucified.

Subject of this Meditation.—Pilate, in order to gratify the hatred of the High Priests ordered Jesus to be scourged; after which the soldiers mocked and maltreated Him as a would-be King of the Jews.

Composition of Place.—The outer square and the inner courtyard of the Prætorium.

Petition.—To bear suffering with Christ loaded down with suffering, to feel anguish with Christ overwhelmed with anguish, to grieve and weep on account of the terrible afflictions which the Son of God underwent for my sake during the Scourging and the Crowning with Thorns.

First Point. The Scouring or Flagellation.

Pontius Pilate, the Roman Procurator of Judea, had already more than once proclaimed our Savior innocent of all the malicious and absurd charges laid against Him by the Jewish High Priests. Nevertheless, through a most cowardly, unjust, and heartless condescension to the envy and hatred of these degenerate sons of Abraham, he now delivered his Divine Prisoner to the soldiers to be scourged. The Scouring, or Flagellation, amongst the Romans, was a punishment reserved for aliens and slaves, and was inflicted with such barbarity that sometimes the culprit would actually die under the lash. But the Son of God longed for our sakes, for the sake of each one of us, to be humiliated like the vilest outlaw and to be chastised like the worst criminal.

Jesus, accordingly, was led to the stone pillar that stood in the square near the entrance to the Prætorium, the fortified residence of the Roman Procurator. There the soldiers rudely stripped Him of His garments, tied His wrists to a ring in the top of the column, so as to stretch His Body to its full length, and then strapped also His feet, which barely touched the ground, to the base. Upon this two of the executioners came forward, each holding in his hand a blood-stained scourge made of several strips of rawhide about twenty inches long, probably reinforced with bits of bone or points of metal. These men placed themselves behind their naked Victim, on a solid platform about a foot high, to gage their blows more accurately and deliver them with greater effect. For a moment there reigned silence around that fatal column, while everybody was waiting for the word to strike. Jesus alone was praying.—Let us meanwhile make an act of profound and ardent adoration: this

is the Eternal Son of God, this is the Second Person of the Most Holy Trinity.

At the command of the officer in charge, the executioners began to strike slowly but forcibly, spacing their blows on the distended Body from the shoulders down, in such a way as to leave no spot untouched. Hissing the scourges cut through the air, and wherever they came down there they left several ugly wales. The shock was terrible. The sacred flesh of our Lord was quivering in every fibre. The darting pain caused a sense of dizziness and fainting. But stripes were added to stripes, and soon the skin became a network of livid ridges. Then it began to break in one place after another, and the lashes dripping with blood scattered it all around. The first batch of executioners was now relieved by the second. These fellows seemed to vie with one another in savage brutality, in order to wring from their helpless Victim a cry of complaint or a petition for mercy. Every one of their now rapidly succeeding strokes enlarged the gashes already made, so that after a while the whole back appeared to be but one open wound. But also the chest, sides, and thighs of our Adorable Savior were cruelly lacerated by the sharp ends of the thongs, and even the remotest parts of His Body got their full share of torture. As the Scourging still went on with unabating violence, shreds of skin and flesh were being torn off, and the pain increased beyond all measure. Jesus continued to submit to His tormenters with perfect patience. But His breathing became labored; His moans grew fainter; His head was drooping backward; and the soldiers feared that He was about to swoon away.

It is universally admitted that the more delicate a man's nervous system and bodily organization is, the

more sensitive also he is to suffering. Now there had never been such a perfect specimen of manhood as our Divine Lord, and this exquisite refinement of soul and body gave to each of the strokes He received an efficacy of which we can hardly form a vague idea. In fact, it would be difficult for us to realize what an ordinary person would have endured under this barbarous punishment. In countries where this penalty is still sometimes inflicted, although the number of lashes is very limited, the public records prove that even the most robust individuals are liable to faint.

Yet this physical torment, though so terrible, was only the smallest portion of the afflictions borne by Jesus during the Scourging. The deep confusion caused by the exposure of His virginal Body to the unholy gaze of the bystanders, and still more the mortal anguish arising from the foulness and malice of the particular kind of sins He was expiating, these were mental torments entirely beyond the reach of our human understanding. There is, indeed, very good reason for thinking that this frightful Flagellation was intended and undergone by the Son of God as a special expiation for transgressions of the Sixth and Ninth Commandments, for sins of sensuality, immodesty, and impurity. For, on the one hand, these sins are most degrading, inasmuch as they subordinate the immortal soul to the corruptible body and subject the free spirit to the brute animal; and, therefore, Jesus, in offering Himself as a Victim for man thus dishonored, wished to be treated after the manner of a slave. On the other hand, the sin of impurity, whether committed in thought, in word, or in act, implies a certain worship given to the flesh, and hence Christ, in atonement for this idolatry, willed

His sinless flesh to be so deeply humbled and so cruelly lacerated.

But at last this horrible Scourging had come to an end and the soldiers loosened the ropes that bound our Lord to the pillar. His sacred Body, all covered with wounds and completely exhausted, sank to the ground which was wet with His own blood.

This, then, was the price paid by Jesus, my God and Savior, in particular for the carnal vanity, wanton immodesty, and sensual indulgence of mankind, for those heinous offenses the mere recollection of which, if we ever had the misfortune of committing any, should cause us to die of shame and grief. He Who is Essential Purity and Absolute Holiness, was here publicly punished like a contemptible wretch and a common criminal; that thus He might, in our stead, make adequate reparation to the outraged Majesty of the Most High. Whoever at any time unlawfully gratified the passion of lust, can say in very truth: "This excruciating torture and anguish was all the work of my hideous sins; every blow was struck and every insult was inflicted by my shocking violations of the Divine Law. It was for me that Christ suffered all this; for me, His rebellious servant; for me, the real criminal; for me, most wicked sinner; for my sake and on my account."

But those also who have been preserved from grievous falls may well exclaim: "How can I bear to see Him, my Innocent Redeemer, my Adorable Master, in such torment and ignominy, while I, His wayward creature, His faithless companion, live in ease and comfort? Oh! how little I have as yet done in penance for my numberless acts of self-indulgence. How eagerly I should embrace every means of curbing my sensuality. And how diligently I should seek to be

afflicted and despised in order to make some return for His boundless love."

However, the contemplation of the Scourging should not merely inspire us with a real hatred of our sinful self and with a firm resolve to expiate our animal gratification, but it should also render us most watchful in the custody of our senses, fill us with a profound abhorrence of anything opposed to the angelic virtue, and cause us to pray daily with intense earnestness for the gift of holy purity.

Second Point. The Crowning with Thorns.

Notwithstanding His indescribable sufferings, our Divine Savior, with a great effort, had just risen to His knees in order to resume His garments. He was surrounded by a group of idle soldiers who had been present at the Scourging and were waiting for the further orders of Pilate. Far from reaching our Lord a helping hand or rendering Him the least service, they were taunting Him with coarse and cruel jests. Suddenly one of these men got a wicked inspiration. He remembered that Jesus had claimed to be a King, but that as such He had already been ridiculed by Herod, who had sent Him back to Pilate clothed in the white robe of a candidate for office, and that He had actually been rejected by His own people, who, perhaps, just then could be heard clamoring for His condemnation, from various parts of the marketplace. While the Roman Procurator was still deliberating on his future course of action, it occurred to this man that he and his fellow soldiers might divert themselves by pretending to invest their Prisoner with the royal dignity.

The suggestion met, of course, with general approval. At once they summoned all their comrades,

some five hundred in number, to take part in this entertainment; and laying hands on our Adorable Savior, they rushed Him into the inner courtyard of the Prætorium. There some of them made Him sit down on a rough block of wood or marble as on a throne, dragged off the outer garment with which He had just covered His mangled Body, threw over His bare shoulders an old military cloak instead of a royal mantle, stuck a piece of bamboo, for a scepter, between His fettered hands; whilst others, out of the thorny branches used for the fire during the night, fashioned something like a cap to serve as a kingly crown, and, amid the noisy acclamations and insulting jeers of the whole gathering, pressed this violently down upon His head. The sharp thorns pierced and ripped the skin in every direction and the blood trickled down in abundance over the forehead, temples, and cheeks of our Divine Lord.—Here again let us make an act of humble and fervent adoration: this is the Eternal Son of God.

The ceremony of coronation being thus concluded, those brutal soldiers formed a large circle around our Savior and organized a procession of inauguration. Slowly they passed before Him, each one in turn bending the knee in mock veneration, whilst saluting Him with a derisive "Hail, King of the Jews!", and then getting up they spat upon His haggard and blood-stained countenance, inflicted blows and kicks upon His wounded Body, or snatching the reed from between His hands, in sheer fiendishness, drove with it the crown of thorns deeper and deeper over His bleeding brow. Every now and then the procession would get disorderly; several of the men were, or pretended to be pushed on, and fell clumsily over their agonizing Victim, Who in this way was more than

once thrown to the ground, trampled under foot, and well-nigh stifled in the dust; while the whole crowd was yelling savagely: "Hail, Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews!" Our Lord, however, bore everything with unbroken silence and unalterable meekness; only His tears bespoke the excess of His sufferings.

Adam had sinned through pride, and we would sin through pride,—through self-complacency, vanity, human respect, ambition, anger, stubbornness, disobedience,—and for all that pride Jesus desired to atone by submitting to this atrocious buffoonery, this inhuman cruelty. Yes, we are all permeated with that venom of Hell; every one of our sins is an effect of that detestable vice; and if we wish to make our salvation certain, if we wish to cancel the faults committed in the past, if we wish to serve God more faithfully in the future, if we wish to persevere in our sublime Vocation by steadily advancing towards Holiness, we must strive by all means to become thoroughly and profoundly humble. Being made the sport and plaything of these insolent soldiers, recruited from the dregs of society, the Son of God says to each of us with urgent emphasis, "Learn of Me, because I am meek and humble of Heart." But woe to us, Religious, if we neglect or discard this supreme lesson of humility; woe to us, if we can behold our Adorable Master subjecting Himself to this disgustingly outrageous treatment on account of our very pride, and do not resolve, with the help of His grace, lovingly to welcome and patiently to bear every slight, every rebuke, every insult, every humiliation that may be sent us by His Divine Providence, through the agency of any man, high or low, cultured or ignorant, devout or wicked. "For if in the green wood they do these things what shall be done in the dry?" What

will be the eternal confusion heaped upon a Religious lost through pride? And how fervently we should daily implore from the Sacred Heart of Jesus that most indispensable virtue of humility.

Third Point. The Concealment of the Divinity.

This remarkable fact, to which St. Ignatius takes care to call our attention from the very opening of the Third Week, stands out vividly in the Scourging and still more so in the Crowning with Thorns. The Sacred Humanity of Christ was not only deprived of the normal effects of the beatific vision,—though this continued substantially unchanged,—but also of every other form of assistance and consolation. To the eyes of the bystanders there was nothing in Jesus that could strictly be called Godlike: He had been completely abandoned to the savage fury of His tormentors. Nevertheless, the human will of Christ, ever perfectly united to the Divine Will, accepted not only most patiently but even most eagerly every pain and every indignity inflicted on Him by these ruffians, for the glory of God and the salvation of souls. “When He suffered He threatened not; but He delivered Himself to those who judged Him unjustly.” The Divinity sustained the Humanity only in so far as to enable our Savior to suffer the worse and the longer, that thus He might satisfy more fully His boundless gratitude for all the favors of the Adorable Trinity, His burning zeal for the offended Majesty of the Most High, and His devouring thirst for the happiness of His brethren.

It is plain that, whatever we may do, we can never except very distantly approach such transcendent Holiness, or make any but a very inadequate return for such astounding Liberality. Hence, though it be

beyond our strength to do as much as the Saints, we should at least do whatever we can with the help of Divine Grace. At the revolting spectacle of this wanton barbarity exercised against this meekest and humblest of men, in Whom by faith we clearly recognize the Almighty Creator, the Sovereign Lord, the Infinite Goodness, we will prostrate ourselves before Him in loving adoration and offer Him our entire renunciation of human comforts and earthly distinctions, as far as permitted by His Eternal Providence. For the future, our satisfaction shall be to be deprived of what would gratify our senses or passions; our ambition, to be treated as the lowest member of the Community and as the least of mankind. Fully convinced that of ourselves we are nothing but cowardly ingrates, we will humbly beg Him for the grace of frequently undergoing treatment similar to what He endured for love of us and in consequence of our iniquities, that thus we too may make some atonement for our past offenses and some contribution for the conversion of the world, in union with Jesus, our Adorable Savior. Far from importuning our Heavenly Father to shield us from affliction or humiliation, we will henceforth thank Him for granting us these precious opportunities to do penance for our sins, to imitate the example of His Only-Begotten Son, and to prove our gratitude for His Ineffable Mercy.

Let us here consider also how many Religious fast rigorously almost the entire year; how many abstain habitually from whatever would please their palate; how many discipline their bodies severely nearly every day; how many wear pointed steel chains as bracelets or girdles from the hour of rising till breakfast time; how many take their necessary rest sleep-

ing on rough boards or on the bare floor; how many pray morning, noon, and night, for several minutes with arms extended; how many constantly volunteer to do the lowliest and hardest work about the house, laundry, refectory, kitchen, or scullery. All this and much more they gladly undertake, though never without the sanction of their Superiors, in order to subdue sensuality and to forestall temptation, to make reparation for their sins, and to become like to their Divine Master. Animated by the example of these true Disciples of Christ and relying on the infinite merits of His Sacred Passion, we will promise our Heavenly Spouse that, as long as our health permits, we shall not only avail ourselves diligently of all common exercises of penance, but besides generously practise whatever self-affliction we may undertake with the approval of our Spiritual Guides.

Colloquy with Jesus scourged and mocked for love of me and on my account. How earnestly but also how confidently I should implore from Him an intense shame and burning contrition for my sinful indulgence contrary to modesty or purity, for any foolish unguardedness in the use of my senses or imagination, for any inordinate curiosity in reading or study, as well as for every thought of self-complacency or ambition, for every show of vanity or stubbornness, for every act of disobedience or pride. Contemplating my Adorable Savior covered with blood and crowned with thorns, in just punishment for my crimes, I ought to melt in tears at the remembrance of all my ingratitude and wickedness. But I must also beg Him again and again, by this fearful Flagellation and this fiendish Mockery which He bore with such perfect Meekness, for my sake and in my stead,

to bestow upon me the priceless grace of applying myself unceasingly to the acquisition of the Third Degree of Humility. Sincerely acknowledging that hitherto I have made very little progress towards constant self-denial and thorough self-abasement, I will not rise from my knees till Jesus, my Merciful Lord, has inspired me with some definite and efficacious Resolutions to follow Him from now on not merely in fancy but in very deed.—Our Father.

THE HOLY MASS

Of all devotional exercises calculated to advance us in grace and perfection, none can be more efficient than attendance at Holy Mass. For the Sacrifice of the Altar, in which Christ our Lord daily offers Himself in a mystic though real manner, under the foreign appearances of bread and wine, through the instrumentality of the verbal Consecration, is the same as that which He offered some nineteen hundred years ago, in the natural form and condition of a mortal man, through the instrumentality of the Roman soldiers, on the ignominious Cross of Calvary. But just as many of those who were present at that Bloody Immolation of the Lamb of God went away unchanged for the better, so even now many of those who assist at the Unbloody Immolation of Jesus Christ derive from it but little benefit. The cause is not far to seek. It is our lack of spiritual insight. We do not appreciate at their true value the Sublime Mysteries so constantly enacted before us on the altar, we do not understand what part we are to take in this Divine Function, we do not see how we are to realize our part. Let us, therefore, consider briefly; first, the Value of the Holy Sacrifice as shown by its threefold end; secondly, the Share we are to take in it, namely, our self-sacrifice in union with Christ; and thirdly, the Means of actuating this self-sacrifice.

The Threefold End or Purpose of the Mass.

The Primary and Essential Purpose of all Sacri-

fice is Adoration; namely, that practical recognition of God's Supreme Excellence and Absolute Dominion which all intellectual creatures owe Him as their First Beginning and their Last End. Of all our duties this one is no doubt the most fundamental and the most indispensable. It is a duty the rapturous performance of which will engage us for all eternity in Heaven, singing in sweetest harmony with myriads of Blissful Spirits, "Holy! Holy! Holy! Lord God of Hosts!" For though an act of love and an act of adoration are formally different, yet they are materially inseparable, so that adoring love and loving adoration are one and the same motion of the soul.

Now in Holy Mass we possess a most potent means of complying with this all-important obligation. For the Victim offered in acknowledgment of the Divine Supremacy is truly a Victim of infinite worth, the Man-God, Jesus Christ; and It is offered with the fathomless humility and the unspeakable love of His Sacred Heart. Let us, then, exert ourselves particularly during the early part of the Mass, while preparing for the solemn moment at which our Blessed Savior will mystically renew the unreserved Immolation of Himself once made on Calvary, to stir up similar sentiments in our own proud and selfish hearts. It is only thus that we can learn to value every creature solely in its relation to its Creator, that we can succeed in concentrating all our energies on the perfect fulfilment of the Divine Will, and that we can come to be wholly possessed by a burning zeal for the greater glory of the Sovereign Majesty, so as to live and labor for nothing but the wider, more copious, more splendid manifestation of the Infinite Goodness and Beauty, God.

Another End of the Holy Sacrifice is Propitiation.

For this we have the constant teaching of the Church, and the frequent references in her time-hallowed liturgy. Moreover, our Adorable Redeemer clearly indicated this End, when He first made the mystic oblation of His Body and Blood. "This is My Body," He said, "which is being given for you."—"This chalice, which is being poured out for you, for the remission of sins, is the new testament in My Blood." Now, this Propitiation consists in the application of the infinite atonement and merit of the Cross; and inasmuch as it is our Blessed Lord Who offers Himself for us in Holy Mass, its propitiatory, satisfactory, and impetrative effects are infallible, provided we assist at His Sacrifice in the requisite dispositions.

Hence it is safe to affirm that the fruits of justification and sanctification, the temporal and spiritual benefits, reaped from this August Function are exactly proportional to our actual purity and fervor of soul. If only we knew, therefore, how to profit by this stupendous grace, we might confidently expect to obtain not merely a daily more complete canceling of the guilt, penalty, and residue of sin, but also a rapid increase of virtue and a marked progress towards perfection, together with countless other favors for ourselves and our neighbor. And this should spur us on, during the principal part of the Mass, from the Offertory to the Pater Noster, most ardently to implore the Divine Liberality for our own necessities as well as for the interests of our Companions and the sanctification of our Superiors, particularly for the welfare of our Holy Father the Pope. Besides, we should pray earnestly for our pupils or other charges; for our relatives, friends, benefactors, and enemies; for bishops, priests, religious, and laymen; for sinners, heretics, schismatics, unbelievers,

and idolaters; lastly, for all those who are in affliction, for those about to die this very day, and especially for the suffering souls in Purgatory. If we but reflect seriously for a few moments how the Sacred Heart of Jesus is, as it were, breaking under the strain of His passionate longing for the salvation and perfection of every single man, with what intense desire should we not be consumed to pray, labor, suffer, and die for the spiritual progress and the eternal well-being of our brethren?

The Third End of the Holy Mass is Thanksgiving. Just as we cannot adequately honor God without imploring His all-powerful help for our countless miseries and necessities, so we do not honor God worthily, unless we also render Him devout thanks for the inestimable blessings incessantly poured out on every creature and most of all on man. In order, then, that we may be able to share somewhat in that most humble and fervent gratitude which ever animates the Heart of our Savior, let us briefly review, especially during the latter part of the Mass, the principal favors of which we have been the unworthy recipients. For convenience, we may arrange them under eight heads, like the eight notes of a celestial gamut, the exquisite melody of which is forever rising from the multitude of the Blessed to the throne of the Uncreated Goodness, the Most Holy Trinity.

First, the Almighty Father loving me with an infinite, gratuitous love from all eternity and in time creating me man; secondly, the Adorable Word made Flesh for my redemption, laboring and suffering for my sake, and dying on a Cross, to atone for my detestable iniquities; thirdly, Jesus, true God, and true Man, dwelling with me under the same roof in the humble tabernacle, offering Himself anew for me on

the altar at this very moment and at every hour of the day all over the world, and lowering Himself even so far as to become the Food of my soul in Holy Communion; fourthly, the Divine Spirit, after taking possession of my soul in Baptism and Confirmation, continually descending upon me for my guidance and support, inspiring me with good thoughts and generous desires, purifying me more and more from sin and its consequences, and thus rendering my heart a less unbecoming temple for the Ever-Adorable Trinity; fifthly, Mary, the Immaculate Mother of God, ever watching over me as her adopted child with the most tender solicitude, my joy in affliction, my strength in temptation, my perseverance in weariness, and my unfailing refuge whenever I fall; sixthly, the precious gift of the Sacred Heart, my Vocation to the Religious State in this holy Institute and all its special means of sanctification, bestowed on me day after day in spite of my utter worthlessness and numberless infidelities; seventhly, God, in His Admirable Providence, actually supplying my various needs through the agency of innumerable creatures, while disposing with unsearchable wisdom and unwearied love every circumstance of my life, from the most trifling detail to the most decisive event, to make me holy, perfect, entirely His; and lastly, Jesus, my Triumphant Redeemer, preparing for me, instead of the well-deserved, everlasting torments of Hell, an inconceivable, never-fading bliss in Heaven, a true participation in the very Nature of God.

After thus recalling to mind this endless chain of most marvelous favors, we shall surely be forced to exclaim: "O infinite bounty, O inexhaustible liberality of my Creator, my Redeemer, and my Spouse! How have I been able to live so long without loving

Thee? without sacrificing for Thee my whole self? without consuming all my gifts and talents in praising and serving Thee, and in inviting all creatures to thank and glorify Thee? Take, then, O Lord, take and receive all I am and all I have; only give me Thy grace and Thy love, to draw all hearts to the worship of Thy Blessed Name, to the experience of Thy Boundless Mercy, and to the accomplishment of Thy most Holy Will."

The Share we are to Take in the Mass.

Having thus briefly considered the triple end of Holy Mass, adoration, propitiation, and thanksgiving,—which may, not inaptly, be referred to the Three Persons in the Indivisible Divine Substance, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost,—let us now examine what part we are to take in this daily oblation of the Incarnate Word.

As we all know, the first point of difference between the Sacrifice of the Cross and the Sacrifice of the Mass is this: that on Calvary our Divine Savior was the sole Pontiff; while on the Altar He is offered not only by Himself as the principal and efficient Priest; but also by the celebrant as a true though subordinate and, we might almost say, ministerial priest; and, besides, by the whole body of the faithful through the medium of their representative. Hence, in the Canon of the Mass, the Church directs her minister to pour forth the following prayer: "We, therefore, beseech Thee, O Lord, graciously to accept this Oblation made to Thee by us, Thy servants, and by Thy entire household." In fact, already before the Preface, the celebrant thus exhorts the congregation: "Pray, brethren, that the Sacrifice which is both mine and yours may become acceptable to God, the Father Al-

mighty." However, from this we must not conclude that all the members of the Church offer the Mystic Sacrifice in exactly the same way. For while many do so only habitually,—those namely who, by their profession of Christianity, participate in the worship given to God all over the world according to the rites instituted by Christ,—others offer the Holy Mass also actually, either by helping to procure what is necessary, or by serving the celebrant at the altar, or by merely attending the Sacred Mysteries.

But from this first difference there follows another and very important one; namely, that in Holy Mass the Mystical Body of Christ, the Catholic Church, forms part of what is offered to God, while on Calvary Jesus was the sole Victim. For the outward sacrifice, that is, the action witnessed by the senses, derives all its meaning from the fact that it is symbolically expressive of the inward worship by which a man submits and devotes Himself entirely to God. This flows from the very nature of a sacrifice, and is confirmed by the explicit teaching of St. Thomas. It is this interior self-immolation which is referred to in the beautiful prayer made immediately after the oblation of the bread and the wine: "In a humble spirit and with a contrite heart we beg to be received by Thee, O Lord, and may our Sacrifice this day be such in Thy sight as to please Thee, O Lord God." Hence, in so far as the members of the Church really participate in the Eucharist Holocaust of Christ, they necessarily also associate themselves with the Divine Victim, offering It as a substitute for their own persons and intending thus to express the feelings of unconditional submission and unreserved dedication with which they desire to be consumed for the honor of the Most High.

The Church, then, in Holy Mass is joined to Christ not only as Offerer but also as Victim, she being the Mystical Body of which He is the Head. This is why our Adorable Savior wished to be immolated on the altar under such appearances as would figure forth this Mystic Body, which He was to acquire by His Passion and Death. In other words, the species of bread and wine are symbols of the mutual union of the faithful, inasmuch as the one results from the grinding of many grains and the other from the crushing of many berries. This is also why, even after the Consecration, which essentially constitutes the Eucharistic Sacrifice, the celebrant begs God to look down upon the Oblation with a serene and propitious countenance, and to command It to be laid by angelic hands on the celestial altar in the sight of His Divine Majesty. For these and similar prayers, which might otherwise appear inexplicable and inadmissible, become full of meaning and devotion, as soon as we recollect that in Holy Mass the Church is both actively and passively associated with Christ our Lord.

We are, therefore, warranted to conclude that in order to derive from this August Sacrifice the full benefit intended, we must unite ourselves to the Sacred Heart of Jesus in a twofold manner: as offering and as offered. During this Sublime Function, our hearts should, like that of Christ, be wholly engrossed with the three Great Ends, Adoration, Propitiation, and Thanksgiving: earnestly striving to relish and share the absolute purity of all His intentions and His devouring zeal for the exaltation of the Divine Glory, His vehement detestation of even the slightest venial sin and His insatiable thirst for man's salvation, His perfect reference of every gift to the Eternal Goodness and His burning gratitude

for the numberless favors continually lavished on all mankind. However, not content with this, we should conjointly with our Blessed Redeemer also offer ourselves and all we are and have, for these same Ends for which He offers Himself daily on our Altars, in memory of His Sacrifice of the Cross. Even as a few drops of water are inseparably mingled with the cup of wine, so our feeble self-immolation should be intimately associated with the Perfect Holocaust of the Son of God.

This, the most obvious and most indispensable element of attendance at Mass, is unfortunately the very one that is most commonly ignored and most completely overlooked. Reverential postures, devout prayers, loving aspirations, though all very good, are only accessories, whilst the principal thing is Self-Immolation in union with Christ our Lord. From what has been said it is also clear, that "hearing Mass" ought to be the special devotion, the favorite exercise, not to say of every Christian, surely at least of every Religious, since his very State is one of complete self-immolation and his whole Life is to be a continual practice of self-denial.

How to Actuate our Self-Sacrifice.

It only remains now to make a few suggestions about the Means we have of actuating this Sacrifice of self in union with Christ. For mere words will not do, we must come to deeds. St. Paul in his First Epistle to the Corinthians, in explanation of the Divine injunction, "Do this in commemoration of Me," adds, "For as often as you shall eat this Bread and drink this Chalice, you shall announce the death of the Lord." Now St. Basil makes on these words the following beautiful commentary: "We announce

the death of the Lord when we die to sin and live to Christ, or when the world is crucified to us and we are crucified to the world." And this meaning, attached by a Holy Doctor to the text of the Great Apostle, is by no means so far-fetched as it might appear to some at first sight. For how, indeed, can we more clearly announce the death of Christ, that is, how can we more loudly proclaim that excess of Divine Love which caused our Adorable Savior to expire for each of us in unutterable shame and affliction, than by completely sacrificing ourselves, after His example, by His grace, and for love of Him?

But there is no Self-Sacrifice possible, at least in this present world, without enduring anguish and contempt. Not that anguish and contempt constitute the Sacrifice, but they are its inseparable concomitants, or rather its requisite instruments, the indispensable means for its execution; while the Sacrifice itself consists in the interior abandonment and dedication of the soul to God, an act that necessarily produces an increase of heavenly peace and supernatural nobility, and which forms the ceaseless occupation of Saints and Angels in Eternal Bliss. But here on earth the perfection of our Self-Sacrifice will be exactly proportional to the intensity of our affliction and the depth of our humiliation.

Hence, the more intimately we wish to participate in the Holocaust of our Divine Master, the more ardently we must cherish the Cross, not only by generously bearing our actual troubles, but also by earnestly praying for as much bodily and mental suffering as may be compatible with God's Adorable Providence. Now this we can do from three distinct motives; first, from contrition for our sins, desiring to atone for them as fully as possible by the applica-

tion of the infinite merits of our Blessed Lord; secondly, from zeal for souls, embracing our trials in union with our Crucified Redeemer for the salvation and perfection of our brethren; and thirdly, from pure affection, simply to exercise and strengthen our love for Him, Who has loved us so excessively from all eternity, our Heavenly King.

As to the First Motive, however high we may have risen in the spiritual life, we should constantly keep in mind that devotion without contrition is sheer illusion. Not only the guilt of venial faults, but also the unpaid penalty of past sins, and the evil tendencies they have fostered, are so many stains which, as long as they are not wholly removed by due atonement, render us displeasing in the eyes of our All-Holy Lover and prevent Him from admitting us on terms of intimate familiarity. Just as a person that has offended a dear friend or owes him a considerable sum of money feels ashamed to appear in his presence, so the soul defiled by sin or its consequences dares not and cannot gaze on the blissful countenance of her Divine Spouse. And as after death, the redeemed but still imperfect spirit eagerly plunges itself into the cleansing fires of Purgatory, so already here on earth, the truly repentant sinner is ever animated by a holy hatred and sincere contempt of self, and longs to be despised and ill-treated by every creature of God. Now, such a petition may be conveniently joined to the consideration of the First End of Holy Mass, Adoration, and thus engage us during the early part of the Mystic Sacrifice, for which the Liturgy prescribes various penitential prayers together with the Angelic Hymn or Greater Doxology.

As to the Second Motive from which we may beg for affliction and humiliation, namely, zeal for souls,

it hardly needs any further development. Every member of an apostolic Institute should be able to say with St. Paul: "I fill up in my flesh what is wanting to the Passion of Christ, for His Body, which is the Church." For, though our Blessed Lord procured man's redemption at the price of His Blood poured out in an ecstasy of love, amid the direst torments and the bitterest ignominy; yet the effects of that redemption are still to be distributed all over the world and to be communicated to all succeeding generations by the Voluntary Crucifixion of the disciples and companions of the Divine Crucified. According to the admirable plan of God, men are to be saved and sanctified, primarily by Christ, His Only-Begotten Son, and secondarily by their fellow men, His adopted children, but in either case through the Cross. As long as we are looking for our own satisfaction, whether it be of the senses, or of the intellect, or of the will, we are not laboring for souls. Our labors, whatever they may be, will be fruitful for salvation only in as far as they are seasoned by mortification and humiliation, by weariness and contradiction, by loss of comfort, health, honor, liberty, and life. Not that we are to pray, without a special inspiration, for the rare privilege of being cruelly butchered by barbarous idolaters. But while in the Holy Mass the Sacred Heart of Jesus is daily imploring for every one of us the fruits of His Priceless Passion and Death, we too should beseech and conjure our Heavenly Father for the grace of partaking more largely in the measureless affliction of His Incarnate Son and of being more completely immolated by Obedience, for the salvation and perfection of our neighbor.

But even if we had neither sins to atone for nor souls to save and sanctify, there would still be a Third

Motive from which to beg for pain and scorn, the motive of pure affection for Jesus, our Adorable Master. For true love incessantly strives after a perfect communication of goods, after the leveling of every inequality and the obliteration of every distinction, save only that of individuality and personality. The Lover cannot bear to be better circumstanced or to be more honored than the Beloved. Now, in our present condition, we have no proper knowledge of God, the Beloved of our souls, except only in so far as He revealed Himself to us in His assumed Humanity, poor, ignored, reviled, betrayed, mocked, scourged, crowned with thorns, overwhelmed with infamy, and nailed to a Cross, dying the death of a recreant slave. It is precisely this sensible manifestation of God's Ineffable Goodness that so powerfully stirs the human heart, while the abstract consideration of His Adorable Perfections generally leaves it cold and barren. And hence, no true love here below without pain, no life without death; no perfection without self-renunciation. God Himself has obeyed this supreme law, the Law of Love. For, as He found us sunk in wretchedness and degradation, He forsook the inaccessible splendors of His Majesty, and for our sakes took upon Himself the form of sinful flesh. His is a more than passionate love, an excessive love, a substantial love, a Divine Love; let ours be at least a human love, a passionate love, a love of soul and body, a love that energizes all our faculties, all our senses, a love that ever prays and strives and longs to become more and more similar to the Beloved, and to be clothed, for His sake and reverence, with the glorious livery of the Cross. This is a marvelous grace, and surely there can be no more appropriate time to implore it than when our hearts, refreshed and inflamed by Holy Com-

munion, are united with the Sacred Heart of Jesus in offering to the Ever-Blessed Trinity a perfect Sacrifice of Thanksgiving.

These, then, are some brief suggestions regarding the realization of our Self-Sacrifice. Only let us remember that we cannot come to Jesus except through Mary, and that, if we desire to suffer with Him, none can teach us how except she, who standing till the end under the Cross of Calvary, had her Immaculate Heart transfixed with all a mother's agony of love, for our sins, for our sanctification, and for our Crucified God. In conclusion, therefore, as she assisted at the Bloody Immolation of her Divine Son, so should we strive daily to assist at the Unbloody Sacrifice of the Mass.

THE CRUCIFIXION

Introductory Remarks.—"And I, when I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all things to Myself." In these words our Divine Lord wished to teach us the irresistible power that would go forth from His Cross. It is this power of Christ Crucified that has transformed infidels into believers, worldlings into ascetics, persecutors into apostles, cowards into heroes, and sinners into saints. To experience its efficacy for our own sanctification, let us frequently contemplate that most marvelous spectacle of Calvary: God, the Almighty Creator, dying in anguish and disgrace to cancel the crimes committed against Him by man, His fallen creature.

Subject of this Meditation.—After the crowning with thorns, Pilate showed Christ our Lord to the people and the High Priests, but they continued to demand His crucifixion. On being asked whether they wished to crucify their King, they positively rejected Him and proclaimed their submission to Cæsar. Then Pilate yielded completely to their fiendish hatred and condemned Jesus to death. This sentence was carried out on Calvary, where our Divine Savior remained hanging on the Cross for fully three hours before He expired.

Composition of Place.—Mount Calvary, a little hillock beyond the western walls of Jerusalem.

Petition.—To bear suffering with Christ loaded down with suffering, to feel anguish with Christ overwhelmed with anguish, to grieve and weep on account of the terrible afflictions which the Son of God underwent for my sake on Calvary.

First Point. Jesus Nailed to the Cross.

The terrible scourging and the barbarous crowning with thorns suffered by our Adorable Savior, had merely been the preludes to His Crucifixion. It was now nearly noon. The sky, bright all morning, began to darken; a thick haze seemed to be gathering from all around, like a veil drawn by a mysterious hand to hide from Heaven the crime about to be consummated on earth. An immense crowd had already gathered outside the Gate of Judgment, near a somewhat isolated mound, called Golgotha or Calvary, to witness the execution of Jesus of Nazareth. Suddenly a Roman officer appeared at the head of a small detachment of legionaries. Then came our Divine Lord, with His hands tied behind His back, scarcely able to walk, but dragged along by one of the soldiers while supported by another. He was followed by Simon of Cyrene who had been compelled to carry the Cross of Christ, and by the two criminals that had been designated to die with Him, each burdened with his own gibbet. Some more soldiers closed the dismal procession, which was succeeded by a numerous company of frowning priests and sanctimonious scribes.

At last they reached the bare and level top of Calvary. Simon threw down his heavy load at the spot selected by the officer, and the executioners at once got everything ready for their grewsome work. Amongst the Jews it was customary to give those

about to be put to death a drink of wine mixed with myrrh or some other narcotic, in order if not altogether to deaden at least to lessen somewhat the acuteness of their torments. Also on this occasion the usual cup had been prepared by some charitable persons; but our Lord, after taking a few drops to taste its bitterness, gently declined to avail Himself of this only means of relief. He wished to retain full consciousness, that He might suffer in all its intensity the agony of death on the Cross.

And now He was once more stripped by the soldiers. It was indeed a pitiful sight, that delicate Body all bruised and lacerated by the scourges, now bleeding afresh through the brutality with which His garments were torn off and trembling from extreme weakness whilst this outrage was inflicted upon Him before the vast multitude of spectators.

But without uttering a word of complaint or waiting for a command, Jesus stretched Himself out on the instrument of His last and most terrible agony. Even the least movement over the rough surface caused Him acute pain. The executioners without delay bound His body with ropes to the Cross, then they extended His arms with great violence, took their large-headed spikes, planted the points on the palms of the hands, and with a few sharp blows nailed these to the wood. The blood gushed forth, the fingers bent inward, the knees drew up, the eyes filled with tears, and a soft moan betrayed the intensity of the pain.

It was now the turn of the feet. A nervous tremor passed through the silent Victim as the executioners forcibly adjusted the legs along the main beam of the Cross. But what did they care, these brutal and savage mercenaries? Whilst two of them held down the feet in the required position, the other two quickly

drove in the remaining nails. Then they fastened to the top-piece the tablet bearing in Latin, in Greek, and in Aramaic, the inscription, "Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews." Their task was now really done, but they were not yet satisfied. That title, "King of the Jews," reminded them of the crown of thorns which, probably, had been removed to despoil our Lord of His seamless undergarment. They picked it up and mercilessly forced it down upon His head, whilst He uttered that most sublime prayer: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

Jesus was now suffering all the atrocious torture, all the horrible ignominy of Crucifixion, the full penalty demanded by the Divine Justice for our sins. His sacred Body manifested the unbearable strain caused by its unnatural extension on that infamous Cross. Yet any attempt to move served only to aggravate His torments. The tension in the muscles of the arms grew every moment more agonizing, the wounds made by the nails which passed through the most sensitive spots of the hands and feet became more and more inflamed, utter exhaustion coupled with profuse perspiration caused an inconceivable thirst, and the abnormal circulation in the brain gave rise to an intolerable headache. The blood from His hands ran along His outstretched arms and down His mangled frame, till mingling with that which flowed from His feet, it drenched the ground below. His chest expanded in vain to inhale air, His heart palpitated irregularly, His brow was burning with the heat of fever, deep sighs issued from between His livid lips, whilst His tearful and wide-opened eyes seemed to implore a little compassion.

But from whence could Jesus look for compassion? Surely, not from the High Priests, His ecclesiastical

superiors, who actually gloated to see the disgrace and agony of their Victim and even now assailed Him with bitter sarcasm; not from the fanatic multitude, His own people, who saw in one that was fastened to the gibbet, as they read in the Scripture, only the accursed of God; not from the Roman soldiers, His executioners, for they were too well inured to scenes of torture and bloodshed. Mary, His beloved Mother, was standing there by His Cross, but her presence served only to intensify the anguish of His Sacred Heart.

In reality, Jesus, having offered Himself as a holocaust for our sins, did not wish for any mitigation of the punishment, which the Infinite Wisdom and Goodness desired Him to undergo for the redemption of the guilty race of Adam. Far from it. Even now His Generous Heart was yearning for more torture and anguish, if this could be conducive to the glory of the Divine Majesty or to the salvation of mankind. Men had rebelled against their Creator; and Jesus longed to reconcile His brethren, longed to set them a perfect example of submission and conformity to the most Holy Will of God, by becoming obedient even to the death of the Cross. And thus He hung there for more than three long hours, an outcast, mocked, reviled, abandoned, and cursed. O agony of mercy and of love! The Blissful Spirits are lost in awe; the sun is shrouded in darkness; the earth is shaken to its foundation; the very rocks are rent asunder; shall my heart alone remain unmoved?

Second Point. God Dying for my Sins.

It was not for sin in the abstract that Jesus made this sublime atonement to His Heavenly Father. No, it was for sin in the concrete, it was for the offenses

committed by every single human individual. Hence, Christ was truly crucified for my Sins. I am the wicked slave for whom the Son of God gave His life on the Cross. Indeed, I too have often rebelled against the Sovereign Lord, as often as I violated His Holy Law, as often as I resisted my Legitimate Superiors, as often as I inflicted harm on my neighbor, as often as I indulged my animal senses, as often as I served my wicked passions; and for each of these countless acts of rebellion, Jesus suffered the intolerable torments, the unspeakable infamy, and the fathomless abandonment of His Crucifixion. Even if there had been no other men to be redeemed but me, He would still have welcomed these horrible pains and these yet more horrible outrages and this infinitely horrible dereliction, with the same Divine Avidity, for me alone. "He loved me and delivered Himself for me."

All this, then, He willingly sustained on account of my sins, to expiate my loathsome sensuality, to atone for my senseless pride, to blot out my foul rebellion, to free me from everlasting death in the fire of Hell, to bring me to eternal life, to the bliss and glory of Heaven. All this He embraced for love of me, a mere nothing, a vile wretch, a despicable sinner; He, my Maker, my Savior, my God! Yes, the Infinite Being Who is ever enthroned in unapproachable light above angels and archangels, above dominations, principalities, and powers, above cherubim and seraphim, He Himself is dying for my sins on this most cruel and ignominious Cross. The King of kings is outraged in the stead of a villainous traitor; the All-Holy Creator is immolated for the sake of His guilty creature; the Omnipotent Lord is crucified to reopen for His faithless slave the gates of Paradise. O wonderful

power of the love of God for me! O all but infinite value of my immortal soul!

But what have I done for love of Him? During so many years spent in the world? Alas! I did little else than offend Him. And during so many more years passed in Religion? Oh, how much time I have squandered in tepidity and routinism! What, then, must I not do and suffer for Him in the future? from this very moment till my dying breath?

My Crucified Jesus, from now on I will apply myself with renewed ardor to the pursuit of holiness. Right here, prostrate at Thy pierced and bleeding feet, I will examine myself thoroughly on my whole Religious Life, my Vows, my Rules, and my Resolutions, in order to correct everything that may be in the least displeasing to Thee, my Adorable Savior, and to adorn my soul with all the virtues of my Holy State. I am determined not only to keep my sacred Vows with the utmost fidelity but also to strive with all my energy after spiritual Poverty, angelic Purity, and perfect Obedience. O my Jesus, deign to confirm this my determination by Thy all-powerful grace. As to my holy Rules, particularly those which deal with prayer, humility, self-denial, modesty, silence, and charity, I am resolved to observe them at any cost, and to make the fullest possible reparation for any wilful infraction I may have committed during the past year. For the future, I promise Thee to give myself heart and soul to every exercise of prayer, careful not to lose a single moment of the appointed time through lack of punctuality or earnestness; I promise Thee to be indefatigable from morning till night in the inward and outward practice of supernatural charity; I promise Thee to seek in all things my greatest humiliation and mortification, to grasp every oppor-

tunity of bearing affliction and contempt, in satisfaction for my sins, for the salvation of souls, and simply for Thy sake, my Crucified Lord.

Third Point. Mary Standing by the Cross of Jesus.

"Oh! all you that pass by the way, see whether there is a grief like unto mine." By applying these words of Holy Scripture both to Christ and to Mary, the Church teaches us to what extent the Mother of God participated in the Passion of her Divine Son. No man, indeed, can fathom the ocean of sorrow in which the soul of Mary was immersed, as she stood there on Calvary close to the Cross of her Son, her Savior, and her God. "The pain suffered by the Blessed Virgin," says St. Bernardine of Siena, "was so intense that, if it were divided among her fellow creatures, they would all die on the spot."

For, who can measure the affection that burned in the Heart of Mary for her only Son, Jesus, All-Good, All-Holy, All-Beautiful? She alone could love her Son as her God, she alone could love her Son as her Savior; and accordingly her love for Jesus far surpassed all the love of Angels and of Saints. But in proportion to the greatness of her love was also the greatness of her grief. This, indeed, was the hour when the sword of sorrow, predicted by Simeon, pierced her Spotless Heart. What mother would not willingly give her own life for that of her only child? But Mary was not permitted to do this. She was to stand by, all during those three long hours of untold agony, until she saw her Jesus expire in the most cruel torments, in the most revolting ignominy, in the most bitter desolation.

Meanwhile her grief grew every moment in inten-

sity. Each blow of the hammer driving the nails through the hands and feet of Jesus, deepened the anguish of her soul. Each moan or sigh uttered by the Divine Victim, overwhelmed her spirit with fresh affliction. She keenly realized every one of His sufferings. But from the instant when, in a transport of love, Mary raised her weeping eyes to Jesus on the Cross, she was permitted actually to experience in a marvelous manner all His atrocious torments of body and mind. Though invisible, her crucifixion was real and complete.

It was thus that she earned her glorious titles of Queen of Confessors, Queen of Martyrs, Queen of all the Saints. It was thus also that she became our perfect model and special advocate in our striving after intimate union with Jesus Crucified. At the same time, in remembrance and in place of her dying Son, she accepted each one of us as her beloved child. For each one of us, poor sinners, she willingly bore her unutterable woe. In compliance with the behest of her dying Jesus, "Woman, behold your son," Mary on Calvary became our Mother.

But on Calvary Mary became also the Queen of Apostles, and set us the most sublime example of zeal for souls. For, knowing why Jesus was suffering the shame and torture of Crucifixion, she desired to have as large as possible a share in His bitter Passion, for the salvation of men and for the glory of God. In fact, more heroic than the Mother of the seven Macabean Martyrs, the Immaculate Virgin actually immolated her only Son, in perfect conformity to the Divine Will. More obedient even than the Holy Patriarch Abraham she herself would not have hesitated to nail her beloved Jesus to the Cross, on which He longed to die in atonement for the sins of men and in

sacrifice for the glory of His Father. And thus she completed on Calvary that daily immolation of her Adorable Child which she had made all along from the time of His Incarnation by offering Him as a victim of propitiation on the spotless altar of her Heart.

Christ accomplished our redemption with the generous consent and the intimate cooperation of Mary; and, hence, because of the singular and indispensable part she thus took in this most divine work, she may justly be called our Mediatrix or even our Coredemptrix. While all graces have been merited for us by Jesus, they are being bestowed upon us through Mary; whence it follows that her special office consists in fashioning in us the image of her Divine Son. With what unbounded confidence, therefore, and with what unfailing constancy, we should appeal to the Heart of our Glorious Queen and Mother for the heavenly gift of charity, the love of God and the love of our neighbor, or, in other words, for union with Jesus on the Cross, to glorify the Adorable Trinity and to further the Salvation of Souls.

Triple Colloquy with the Sorrowful Virgin, with our Dying Savior, and with the Eternal Father; imploring mainly three graces: first, the grace of ardent contrition for all my sins and of doing daily all the penance I can; second, the grace of exercising fraternal charity in all my thoughts, words, and actions; third, the grace of constantly keeping before my mind and tenderly cherishing in my heart the image of my Crucified Spouse.—*Stabat Mater. Anima Christi. Our Father.*

A. M. D. G.

“MY CHILD, GIVE ME YOUR HEART.”

EIGHTH DAY

PATRON: St. Teresa of Jesus.

MOTTO: “What shall I render to the Lord?”

SPIRIT: Charity, the perfect love of Friendship.

READING: Imitation; Bk. I, C. 1, 6, 8, 10.

Bk. III, C. 5, 21, 22, 34, 35, 49.

Gospels; St. Luke, C. 10.

St. John, C. 20.

On this last day of the Retreat, strive by deeper recollection and greater fervor to make up for any shortcomings on the previous days and to gather additional strength for the approaching Combat.

DEO GRATIAS ET MARIAE

THE RESURRECTION

Introductory Remarks.—As we are now about to enter upon the Fourth Week, or last period, of the Retreat, St. Ignatius recommends to us three things; first, to think of what is calculated to cause a holy cheerfulness and joy, as for instance, Heaven; secondly, to avail ourselves of the light, the weather, sunshine, flowers, and so forth, in as far as we judge that these things can help us to rejoice in our Creator and Lord; and thirdly, to use moderation in everything instead of practising penance. This, however, does not mean that we should in the least relax in pursuing the object of these Spiritual Exercises. On the contrary, precisely because we are nearing the end of our Retreat, we should redouble our efforts to confirm our determination of walking henceforth in the footsteps of our Holy Founders and Patron Saints. In fact, the grace we are directed by St. Ignatius to pray and strive for in the Exercises of this last period is nothing less than the counterpart of the Third Degree of Humility; namely, an ardent love of friendship, causing us to look upon the joy and bliss of our Savior as our own, and urging us to immolate ourselves, in continual mortification and humiliation, for His Greater Glory.

Subject of this Meditation.—After Christ had expired on the cross, His blissful Soul, united to the Divinity, descended into limbo to console the spirits of the Just; while His sacred Body, likewise united

to the Divinity, was resting in the sepulcher. But having risen again on the morning of the third day, our Adorable Lord appeared in glory to His most Holy Mother.

Composition of Place.—The sepulcher, its construction and arrangement; also the dwelling of our Lady and, in particular, the room she occupied.

Petition.—To be intensely glad and to rejoice exceedingly in the incomparable glory and bliss of Christ our Lord.

First Point. The Descent of the Soul of Christ into Limbo.

Immediately after the death of our Lord and Savior, while His gory and mangled Body is still hanging on the cross, His Soul is flooded with torrents of Heavenly Delights. Now all suffering has ceased for that Soul which only a few moments ago was plunged in an ocean of the bitterest desolation. Now also the Divinity, far from concealing Itself, so to speak, as during the Passion, manifests more fully than ever Its intimate presence. Not only does the Soul of Christ enjoy the beatific vision as before, but all limitations to the admirable effects of that vision are now removed.

It is impossible for us even to form a faint idea of this Supreme Happiness and Glory. For if our own future beatitude, consequent on seeing God face to face, is such as, in the words of the Apostle, no eye has seen, no ear has heard, and no mind has ever conceived, how immeasurably more intense must be the Heavenly Bliss of Him Who is united to God in the oneness of Person? The only thing we can do is to

imagine whatever there is most delightful for the human spirit, and then to say to ourselves that all this, even if multiplied a hundred thousand times, would be hardly more than a feeble shadow or a dim reflection of the blessedness enjoyed by the Soul of Jesus. And what especially renders this beatification and glorification so inconceivably great and noble, is the fact that it constitutes the reward earned by the hardships and sorrows of the Sacred Humanity, the recompense merited by the anguish, torment, and ignominy of the Passion. I will try to enter into the sentiments of that most Blessed Soul, and to rejoice with it as if its bliss were my own, and then reflecting that a similar Happiness is laid up for me too, if I remain faithful and generous in following my King to Calvary, I will draw additional joy from the hope of thus contributing also my little share to His Everlasting Glory.

Yet what should appeal to us as even more admirable, is that Jesus hastens at once to exercise the office of Consoler. This very moment when He enters upon His magnificent Triumph as the Conqueror of Death and Hell, far from resting in the enjoyment of His incomparable Beatitude, He thinks of nothing but the relief of His poor servants, the Just of the Old Law. His Loving Soul, hypostatically united to the Eternal Word, immediately descends into limbo to bring to the Holy Patriarchs the glad tidings of their Redemption, to admit them to the full privileges of Friends and Brothers, and to make them share in His Bliss and Glory. Does it not seem as if, without their participation, Christ considers His own happiness as imperfect and incomplete? O tenderness of the Heart of Jesus! How could I ever again yield to thoughts of discouragement or despond-

ency? For what He did then, He still does now. He longs to see me advance in solid virtue and increase in heavenly merit, and the better to assist me in my weak endeavors, He dwells with me in poverty and obscurity, alas! even in loneliness and oblivion, exposed to irreverence, insult, and profanation, as a Prisoner of Love, in the August Sacrament of the Altar.

Let me figure to myself this limbo, the abode of all those who died in the grace of God under the Old Dispensation. It is not the abyss of Hell, therefore, but a place of profound peace and patient longing. The imminent death of Jesus has been revealed to its holy inmates, and they are all lovingly awaiting His coming. Suddenly He appears in their midst. What immense joy, what unspeakable gladness, what indescribable scenes of gratitude and love! Limbo is instantaneously transformed into Paradise; all these Souls are admitted to the beatific vision, to a share in the Bliss and Glory of Heaven, a share exactly proportional to their labors and sufferings on earth.

Adam and Eve are there, the first to welcome their Divine Descendant and Redeemer. What do they say? How do they feel now about their long penance? Next come the saintly patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; then Moses and Aaron and a host of levites; David and several of his successors on the throne of Israel; the holy prophets that foretold their Savior's birth, His miracles, His passion, and His triumph, Isaias, Jeremias, Ezechiel, Daniel; the noble martyrs of the Old Covenant, Eleazar and the seven Maccabean brothers with their heroic mother; then those who immediately preceded our Lord or had even known Him personally on earth, His grandparents Joachim and Anna, the devout old man

Simeon, the Innocents of Bethlehem, His beloved precursor, John the Baptist, and, dearest of all, His own foster-father Joseph.

I will strive to enter into the feelings of these Souls and to share in their exultation. Now they possess the final reward for their faith in the Divine Promises, for their fidelity in the accomplishment of the Holy Law, for their patience amid all the trials and hardships of their earthly sojourn. How they congratulate our Lord in terms of the most ardent devotion; how they are transformed by heavenly bliss through Him, with Him, and in Him; through Him, as their Redeemer; with Him, as their brother; and in Him, as their God!

Second Point. The Resurrection.

The third day from the death of our Lord is about to dawn; this is the moment set for the fulfilment of the prophecies. The Soul of Jesus, accompanied by all the Just delivered from limbo, repairs to the sepulcher, a tomb-chamber hewn out of the solid rock. Together with them I contemplate once more that Sacred Body wrapped in cloths and extended on the stone shelf. Who could describe with what sentiments of pity, gratitude, and love these Blissful Spirits behold the Adorable Instrument of their Redemption? There it lies cold and livid, but even in death preserving a superhuman loveliness and sublime grandeur. I count with many a tear the terrible lacerations inflicted by the scourges; I kiss with the utmost reverence those cruel wounds in the hands and feet; and then, filled with grief and affection, I dare approach my sinful lips to that wide gash made in the side by the soldier's lance and penetrating even far into the Sacred Heart.

But now the Soul of Jesus unites itself once more to the Body. The same instant all is changed. The Body rises up, every trace of suffering is gone, it is full of life and beauty and majesty. I will contemplate especially the countenance of my Savior, so expressive of goodness, of meekness, and of love. I will look again at those five glorious trophies, and particularly at the large cleft in His Adorable Heart, through which now issues a beam of rays of dazzling brightness. I will consider also the wonderful qualities of this Risen Body: how it is agile like a spirit that in one moment can traverse the entire world; subtile so as to be able to surmount all material obstacles; impassible, that is, no longer subject to any corruption or suffering. What is there left now of all the torments and ignominy of the Passion? Only one thing, Everlasting Glory. This exaltation of the Body is the consequence of what it has undergone during its mortal existence, as the instrument of our Redemption, as the faithful servant of the Soul. A similar bliss awaits also my body, if it is a means of salvation to my soul, by prayer, humility, mortification, obedience, and charity. For this reason, I should treat my body with sincere regard and supernatural love; and, though in consequence of sin it is a somewhat troublesome companion which needs constant watching and frequent correction, yet its wretchedness, intended by God for my greater humiliation, ought not to keep my soul in a perpetual state of anxiety and alarm.

I should also note the impression which the Resurrection of Christ our Lord makes on the Saints of the Old Covenant. What admiration and what joy! They all come to adore this glorified Body of the Son of God; and with unbounded trust they look forward

to their own Resurrection; unless we prefer to hold the opinion that they too were, at the same hour, reunited to their risen bodies. But, however this may be, I will strive to take part in their loving dispositions and to fill my heart with a like confidence, in order to gather strength for the remaining trials and combats of life, courage for the continual restraint of my senses and passions. And prostrating myself in adoration before my Divine Savior, my Heavenly Spouse, I will presume, with deep humility and tender affection, to kiss once more His sacred feet where the nails have left their glorious marks.

Third Point. Jesus Appears to His Beloved Mother.

I will first figure to myself the state of Mary's heroic Soul during the time that elapsed after the burial of Jesus, and I will endeavor to realize the sadness of her Spotless Heart, the Heart of that most devoted Mother, as she goes in memory over the painful scenes at which she has assisted either in person or in spirit. So should I also, after her example, constantly revolve in my mind and diligently ponder in my heart the Passion which my Adorable Master underwent not only in view of my eternal salvation but also in consequence of my detestable sins. But meanwhile her faith, her hope, and her love have been growing all along. As the third day draws near, she dwells more exclusively on the predictions made by her Divine Son, and with ever deeper longing expects their fulfilment. Though not present at the Resurrection, she is supernaturally enlightened and consoled while this most glorious miracle is taking place.

But Jesus is coming without delay to His Beloved Mother. We may imagine that Mary first hears the

sweet song of Angels: "O Queen of Heaven, rejoice." Then a soft radiance fills the apartment where she is praying, and in the midst of this preternatural light appears her Son in all His ineffable Beauty and Majesty. He approaches and greets her as He used to do of old at Nazareth, only with more manifest and tender affection. Mary prostrates herself at His feet to adore Him, but He raises her up and presses her to His Sacred Heart. I will reverently assist at this holy interview between Jesus and Mary; I will listen to their heavenly conversation in order to realize somewhat the feelings of their Hearts, so desirous of the Glory of God and the Redemption of the World; and I will strive to taste a drop of that unspeakable Happiness which is bursting forth from the most Loving Heart of Jesus and inundates the Immaculate Heart of Mary. I can also contemplate the Saints whom our Lord has introduced to her as to their Queen, how they admire, revere, and cherish the Mother of their Savior; and I can hear her cousin Elizabeth exclaim once more with rapturous joy, "Blessed art thou amongst women." Yet all this is only a small earnest of the everlasting reward that awaits Mary for the sacrifice she has made of Jesus on Calvary. What an encouragement for me to be generous and persevering in sacrificing all my lower affections for my own sanctification and for the salvation of my neighbor, for the sake of the Kingdom of Heaven, for the love of my Adorable Spouse!

Jesus, after a while, withdraws His visible presence, but leaves the Blessed Virgin wonderfully comforted and sanctified. This fact should remind me never to attach myself even to Spiritual Consolations. What I must seek in my prayer is Love: love of mortification, love of humiliation, love of apostolic toil, love

of obedience, love of the Cross, love of Jesus Crucified. What I must look for, above everything else, is real Holiness, close union with my Divine Lord, the perfect accomplishment of His Will, through all the miseries and hardships of this present world, ever longing to share in His anguish and ignominy, yet ever abounding in gladness on account of His Bliss and Glory. Far from resting in any consolation as an end, I must use it only as a means to reach the grace of rejoicing so intensely in the Measureless Triumph of my Lord and Master as to make it in a true sense my own, and of promoting it more and more at the sacrifice of everything I have, my energies, my talents, my will, my judgment, my liberty, my health, my limbs, and my very life.

Colloquy.—Delighting and exulting with all the Saints in the ineffable happiness and glory of Jesus, as also in the wonderful consolations bestowed on Mary, I will beg for grace to follow them generously in suffering and humiliation, that thus I may likewise share in their everlasting triumph and heavenly bliss.
—Our Father.

THE ASCENSION

Introductory Remarks.—All the labors and struggles of our spiritual warfare on earth are intended to bring us to the possession of heaven. The Fourth Week of the Exercises, therefore, terminates most appropriately with the contemplation of the triumphal entry of Christ our Redeemer into that Everlasting Kingdom which He had merited by His Death on the Cross.

Subject of this Meditation.—After our Lord had shown Himself repeatedly for forty days to the Apostles, He commanded them to await in Jerusalem the coming of the Holy Spirit. Then having led them forth to Mount Olivet, He was raised up in their presence, and a cloud received Him out of their sight. While they were still gazing after Him two angels stood by them and said: “You men of Galilee, why stand you looking up to heaven? This Jesus Who is taken up from you into heaven shall so come as you have seen Him going into heaven.”

Composition of Place.—The road leading from Jerusalem through Bethany up to the summit of Mount Olivet.

Petition.—To rejoice intensely in the everlasting glory of Christ our Lord, and to labor strenuously to contribute to it also my share.

First Point. Circumstances that Preceded the Ascension.

After the Resurrection, our Adorable Redeemer continued yet during forty days to converse with His Apostles, strengthening them for their future labors and combats, and instructing them more fully about the Kingdom of God, the One, Holy, Catholic Church. Also with us our Divine Lord has deigned to converse intimately during this Retreat, enlightening us as to our Failings in the past and inspiring us with practical Resolutions for the future. Like those privileged Disciples in their brief retirement to the verdant slopes of Genesareth, we too have experienced anew how great is His Love and how constant His Solicitude for such as have dedicated themselves entirely to His Service.

Now these peaceful days, however, are nearly over, and the time is fast approaching for the struggle with our defects, for the execution of our resolves. If we desire to be successful in our efforts and victorious over our obstacles, if we do not wish to slide back into our former habits of tepidity and sin, we must adopt some practical means to insure forever this humble and loving converse of our hearts with God. Jesus, our Heavenly Master, is still with us in the Blessed Eucharist. There especially we must keep constantly united to Him. By this intimate communication with our Adorable Savior we shall obtain a more and more distinct knowledge of His Holy Will in reference to our personal sanctification, and a proportional increase of grace to correspond to His Loving Designs. Often, therefore, whilst kneeling before the tabernacle, let us cry out to Him with all the energy of our soul, "Speak, O Lord, for Thy servant listens"; and again, "Let Thy voice sound in

my ears, O Jesus, for Thy voice is sweet and Thy face comely."

Moreover, faith assures us also that God is intimately present within every soul endowed with sanctifying grace. For, just as our bodies are the Temples of the Holy Spirit, so our hearts are the Tabernacles of the Ever-Adorable Trinity. What thought could be more consoling than this: "Here within my own breast Each of the Three Divine Persons loves me with an ineffably tender love: the Father loves me as His child, the Son loves me as His brother, the Holy Ghost loves me as His spouse"? And how helpful this thought ought to be, not only to live constantly in the presence of God, but also to cleanse our hearts from every remnant of past sin and to adorn our souls with all the virtues of our Holy State.

St. Luke also states that our Lord commanded His Disciples not to leave Jerusalem but to await the coming of the Holy Ghost, according as He had promised them on the eve of His Passion. Since Jerusalem is interpreted Habitation of Peace, we may here consider that in order to enjoy lasting peace we must wage perpetual war: by diligently observing modesty, silence, and recollection, as enjoyed by the Rules; by resolutely mortifying every impulse of sensuality or pride; and especially by generously embracing every opportunity of self-denial and self-abasement. In other words, to lead a happy life in Religion, we should ever be animated by a holy hatred of our sinful self and by a boundless devotion to our Crucified Spouse.

Again, to us also our Lord has made the same promise of the Holy Ghost; and, in fact, we have already received that Divine Spirit particularly in the Sacra-

ment of Confirmation. Yet we may cause Him to dwell in our souls daily with greater intimacy and efficacy, and to bestow on us in ever larger measure His seven gifts: fear, piety, knowledge, fortitude, counsel, understanding, wisdom. This we can do, not only by humble Confessions and fervent Communions, but also by earnest entreaties and loving aspirations. Oh! how sorely we need His light and His fire, to dispel our darkness and consume our selfishness. Hence, we should hardly let an hour pass without beseeching the Divine Spirit to take full possession of our souls; and these supplications should redouble in frequency and intensity during the novena preparatory to the feast of Pentecost.

Some of the Disciples asked, "Lord, will You at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" As yet their zeal was far from perfect. They really longed for the establishment of the Messianic Kingdom, but they had not divested themselves entirely of their national pretensions. Only a zeal that is wholly free from earthly elements can produce substantial results for the salvation of souls. If I desire to promote the Divine Glory by word and labor, I have to get rid of all worldly prepossessions and narrow prejudices. Family connections, local acquaintances, natural accomplishments, racial characteristics, count for nothing in the economy of grace, in the designs of God. The one indispensable qualification of a true Apostle is thorough detachment from self. Before I can gain other followers to Jesus Crucified, I must first, like St. Paul, be nailed with Christ to the Cross. But meanwhile, urged on by a salutary confusion at the thought of my worldliness and inefficiency, I will not cease to implore my Adorable Savior that He may tear from my heart, even if it should have to be all

bruised and broken, every tendency at variance with His Will, every obstacle to His Glory.

What answer did Jesus give to this strange question of His Disciples? "It is not for you," He said, "to know the times or moments which the Father has put in His power. But you shall receive the Holy Ghost, and you shall be witnesses unto Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and in Samaria, and even to the uttermost parts of the earth." This is also our appointed task. Leaving to Divine Providence the time and manner of the final establishment and exaltation of the Heavenly Kingdom, and refraining from all useless speculations about the future trials and triumphs of the Church, we must go and render testimony to Jesus our Lord before the whole world, by the Holiness of a life and the efficacy of a Religion that are in perfect accordance with His Teachings, Counsels, and Examples. "In Jerusalem," that is in the midst of my Religious Companions; "in Judea," among the faithful members of the Church; "in Samaria," amongst the partisans of heresy and schism; "even to the uttermost parts of the earth," in the very midst of our modern infidels and civilized pagans. With what humility and gratitude we should accept this divine commission, with what diligence and energy we should labor to fulfil this glorious charge!

Second Point. The Ascension.

Having thus spoken to enlighten and animate His beloved Disciples, Jesus led them out to Mount Olivet. Our Lord was to enter into the fulness of His Glory from the summit of the hill at the foot of which He had entered upon the agony of His Passion: a very significant fact, in keeping with the words which He

had addressed to the two devout men on the road to Emmaus, "Ought not Christ to have suffered these things and so to enter into His Glory?" How delightful this journey to the Mountain of Olives compared with the one made just six weeks before to the Garden of Gethsemane! Let us, then, constantly bear in mind this great principle; namely, that if we wish to triumph with Jesus, we must embrace mortification and humiliation, suffering and contempt, for His love and reverence, and in union with His Sacred Heart.

"And lifting up His hands," so we read again, "He blessed them." How did He bless them? Undoubtedly, with the Holy Sign of the Cross; and ever since the Cross has been an instrument of Blessing and an emblem of Victory. The blessing of Jesus meant for Mary, a prolonged exile on this earth for the good of the faithful and for her own greater sanctity; for Magdalen, a life of prayer, penance, and charity; for Peter, the burdensome government of the entire Church ending in a death by crucifixion; for all the other Apostles, labors, disappointments, persecution, and martyrdom. But the blessing of Jesus meant, besides, an abundant outpouring of heavenly grace, a notable increase of light and strength.

What is the blessing of Jesus for me at the close of these Holy Exercises? Surely, some kind of cross, either old or new, some duty or trial, under which nature will worry and chafe and rebel, but accompanied by special helps and fresh favors. Let me accept it beforehand, with humility, confidence, alacrity, and generosity. And whenever I bless myself, henceforth, with this sacred token of Man's Redemption and God's Love, I will strive to remember and to renew my Resolution of being spiritually nailed with Jesus to the Cross. This is to be the epitome of

all my lights, the scope of all my efforts, the fruit of my whole Retreat; and the very sign of the Cross or the mere sight of the Crucifix will be my constant remembrancer, reanimating and confirming my determination to embrace every opportunity of self-denial and self-abasement.

“And while they looked on, He was raised up, and a cloud received Him out of their sight.” It was probably about midday when our Lord rose up from the earth, encircled by a heavenly radiance that appeared to outshine the very sun. As Jesus, my Adorable Savior, mounts slowly and majestically, by His own power, I will follow Him in thought, I will contemplate the multitudes of Holy Souls and Blissful Angels that surround Him, I will penetrate as far as the eternal gates through which the King of Glory enters into His everlasting realm. How they swing open of their own accord to admit the triumphal procession! Jesus ascends to the highest Heaven and occupies His throne at the right of the Eternal Father. As God, He always possessed infinite Bliss and Glory, as Man He has merited and conquered this universal Sovereignty by His sacred Passion and Death. How I ought to rejoice at this vision! My whole life, from now on, ought to be but one hymn of gladness and exultation, in accord with the rapturous “Holy! Holy! Holy!” of the Angelic Hosts and the Choirs of the Blessed.

But a throne is being prepared there also for me, and since Jesus, my King, has opened the way, I can and I will merit it by following Him to the Cross, that so I may complete His Bliss and Glory. Henceforth I must live for nothing but the perfect accomplishment of His Will. My heart must ever beat in unison with His Sacred Heart. It must become more

and more detached from all that is earthly, from all that is selfish ; more and more purified from every inordinate leaning and from every worldly affection. Suffering and contempt, oh ! how welcome these ought to be to me ; since they alone can confer on me this angelic purity, and unite me to Jesus, my Adorable Spouse, here on the Cross and hereafter in Heaven.

Third Point. Circumstances that Followed the Ascension.

“And while they were beholding Him going up to Heaven,” thus we read next, “two men stood by them in white garments.” The Disciples should have liked to catch one more glimpse of their Beloved Master, to gather one more word from His Sacred Lips, but this would not have been conformable to the Providence of God. When we receive heavenly consolation, we must not be so taken up with it as to remain of our free choice inactive and motionless. Divine favors are granted, not to make us rest, but to make us work. “You men of Galilee, why stand you looking up to Heaven?” That is the question which we should put also to ourselves at the end of this spiritual Retreat. Our contemplations must yield practical results, our exercises are to bear fruit. We must go and labor and suffer and sacrifice ourselves unreservedly for the Glory of Jesus our Lord and for the Good of our Brethren. In other words, we must begin at once, with all the energy of our being, to carry out our Resolutions. For the time is getting short ; only a few years remain, perhaps only a few days, after which “the night comes when no man can work.”

“This Jesus Who is taken up from you into Heaven, shall so come as you have seen Him going into Heaven.” These words are to be fulfilled for all man-

kind at the General Judgment; but they will also be verified for each of us in particular at the close of our life, at the moment of our death. Our soul, disengaged from the burden of this corruptible body, will suddenly behold, in one intellectual flash, all the favors of God together with all her own doings, and will thus, indeed, see this Jesus, her Lord and Savior, how much He has loved her, how much He has suffered for her, how carefully He has watched, guided, and protected her all during this present period of probation, strife, and exile. Oh! let us diligently prepare ourselves for that coming of our Divine Lover but also our Sovereign Judge. Let us long for this blessed moment, let us be thankful when our strength is undermined by toil and our body is broken down by sickness, since all this will only serve to hasten the ineffable union of our soul with God, her Eternal Spouse.

“They adoring went back to Jerusalem with great joy.” This is the disposition in which I should return to my daily occupations at the close of my Retreat: an intense gladness, a heavenly peace, arising principally from the certainty that Jesus, while enthroned at the right hand of the Father Almighty, above all the hierarchies of Angels and Archangels, of Cherubim and Seraphim, is still thinking of me, His poor servant, with the most tender solicitude. More than this, He stays with me under the same roof in the Holy Eucharist, daily renews for me the sacrifice of the Cross in every Holy Mass, daily deigns to descend into my heart by Holy Communion. Oh! what is there I can do for Him? Just now I longed to die: but no; I must long to live, long to labor, long to suffer, long to increase His Glory by my own sanctification, long to be forever the victim of His Love.

Colloquy with our Triumphant Savior, in adoration, thanksgiving, and petition. "Glory to God in the highest. We praise Thee, we bless Thee, we adore Thee, we glorify Thee, we render thanks to Thee, because of Thy great glory, Lord Jesus Christ, Only-Begotten of the Father, Lord God, Lamb of God, King of Heaven; Who livest and reignest with God, the Father in the unity of the Holy Ghost, world without end. Amen."—Our Father.

FRATERNAL CHARITY

In What Love Consists.

Love is not sentiment ; it consists in deeds more than in feelings and words ; in fact, it is all action. Hence God Who is the infinitely Pure Act, is also the infinitely Perfect Love. Love lies essentially in union of will. Everybody necessarily desires and seeks his own perfection, his own happiness ; and therefore, if we love man, we shall use every means in our power to procure him that perfection, that happiness. This is obviously to love one's neighbor as oneself.

Considered in its motive, the love of our neighbor may be more or less noble. It is sensual, when we love him for the external qualities that please the senses ; and it is intellectual, when we love him for his mental and moral endowments. All this is natural love. Our affection, however, should be supernatural ; and this is the case when we love man because he reflects in these various gifts of body, mind, and spirit, the Adorable Attributes of the Creator ; or because, by sanctifying grace and heavenly bliss, he actually participates in the Sovereign Excellence of God. Accordingly, the love of God and the love of our neighbor are referred to the same virtue of Charity, since they have the same motive, namely, the Inexhaustible Goodness, the Infinite Loveliness of the Most High, revealed to us by supernatural faith.

It is evident that the love of ourselves should be based on the same considerations, and this gives another and deeper meaning to the precept, "Love

your neighbor as yourself." Even the body may and should be loved for the sake of God, because it is the instrument of the soul in promoting the Divine glory, because it is the temple of the Holy Ghost, sanctified by His presence, and because it is destined to share in the everlasting bliss of Heaven.

The love of our neighbor, therefore, consists essentially in an inward disposition which makes us ardently desire his real good, his physical welfare, his mental development, his present sanctification, and his eternal beatitude. It causes us to rejoice with him in so far as he attains these blessings, and to suffer with him in proportion as he is deprived of them. His contentment will be our contentment, his sorrow our sorrow, his glory our glory. Like the Apostle St. Paul, we shall strive to become weak to the weak, and all things to all.

Yes, all things to all; not all things to only a few, especially if this should be the case because of some sensible attraction or natural sympathy. To avoid this and similar mistakes in the practice of Charity, we must not forget that this Queen of all the virtues demands the complete extinction of our selfishness and that we are, consequently, very prone to rest satisfied with some cheap counterfeit, such as sociability, urbanity, affability, indulgence, or optimism. In fact, nowhere else in the spiritual life are illusions more common and more persistent.

But if we sincerely and efficaciously wish our neighbor all true happiness, we shall strive to communicate to him whatever happiness we ourselves may already possess. Our strength will supply his weakness, our knowledge his ignorance, we shall share our food with the hungry, our refreshment with the thirsty, our raiment with the destitute; or at least,

availing ourselves of the numerous opportunities of self-denial afforded by Community Life, we shall in all these things leave the better part for those who may stand in greater need than ourselves. In short, we shall render to everybody, whether friend or enemy, every kind of service that it is in our power to give; always, of course, in due subordination of the material and temporal to the spiritual and eternal; for, once more, our love must be supernatural, it must be founded in God, it must be Charity.

It was such Charity as this that impelled St. Peter Claver to tenderly embrace the poor Negro captives on their arrival at Cartagena, to nurse them, serve them, instruct them, and to make himself in everything their most devoted slave. Again, it was this sincere Charity which animated St. Ignatius Loyola when he heard that his faithless countryman and companion, who some time before had robbed him of a sum of money necessary for his maintenance at the University of Paris, was lying dangerously sick, in utter destitution, at Rouen. At once he hastened, fasting and on foot, to the assistance of this poor wretch, a distance of some sixty miles, and not only lovingly waited on him all during his illness, but also procured for him when restored to health the means to return to Spain, and even provided him with letters of recommendation.

This is truly the virtue eulogized by the Great Apostle: "Charity is patient and obliging; it is neither envious nor morose, neither arrogant nor ostentatious; it is not selfish or irascible or resentful; it takes no pleasure in what is evil, but dwells with joy on what is good; it is ever ready to excuse, to believe, to hope, and to suffer." Does our Charity agree with this brief description? Happy, indeed,

are we if it does; for then, as the Beloved Disciple assures us, God abides in our hearts. But if we still seek our own satisfaction to the detriment of our brother; if we have no thought for his comfort and show no regard for his well-being; if we are blind to his good qualities and cannot bear with his supposed defects; if we seldom or never address to him a kind word and even disdain at times to return his greeting; if his apparent failures give us pleasure while his evident successes fill us with chagrin; surely, we have great reason to fear that our love is more sentimental than solid, more human than divine.

Whom to Love.

We must love all those living in grievous sin, apart from Christ our Savior, or outside the One True Church, such as heretics and schismatics, Jews and Mohammedans, unbelievers and idolaters. What countless multitudes, in every quarter of the globe, are actually in danger of damnation! How terrible a thought! their earthly existence full of wretchedness and suffering, and their future condition one of everlasting anguish and despair. Can we do nothing for them? Can our hearts remain unmoved and cold, whilst the Sacred Heart of Jesus is consumed with a most ardent longing for their salvation? Was it not for each one of these unhappy souls, that He so lovingly embraced all the torment and infamy of His Passion and Death? It rests with us to apply the infinite merits of that Divine Holocaust. For in His Adorable Providence, God has decreed that men are to be saved and sanctified by men. Glorious task, to be a partner of the Most High in this wonderful work of mercy; to cooperate with Jesus, the Incarnate Word, in saving souls; to be the pliant instru-

ment of the Holy Spirit in the justification of our Brethren!

Yet how few busy themselves about the accomplishment of this supreme duty? What have I done up to this? What am I going to do in the future? Do I hold myself in readiness for the field of the Foreign Missions? Do I contribute whatever I can to the success of the Catholic Apostolate? The manifold and precious gifts bestowed on me are intended to yield fruit. Let me beware lest I too should deserve that withering rebuke of the Master: "O wicked and slothful servant, you ought to have committed my money to the banker, and at my coming I should have received my own with usury. Therefore, take away his one talent and give it to him that has ten talents, but this unprofitable servant cast him out into the exterior darkness." On the other hand, how intensely grateful our Adorable Savior will feel towards those who bestir themselves to make known to men the fathomless depth and the boundless breadth of His Charity. Has He not promised to enrich these zealous Apostles with His choicest graces, and to lavish His tenderest caresses on these devoted Disciples? More than this, has He not declared that His Merciful Heart will prove to them a safe refuge at the hour of death and a delightful paradise for all eternity?

But we should love still more earnestly the members of Holy Church, all men living in the state of Sanctifying Grace. These are, of course, much nearer to us than those outside the True Fold, in proportion as they are closer to our Divine Shepherd. According to this principle of well-ordered Charity, first in our affection ought to come the Holy Father, the Reigning Pope, Christ's Supreme Vicar, and with

him the College of Cardinals; next, the Bishops, Priests, and Religious; thirdly, our parents, relatives, and friends; lastly, the other Faithful in every clime and nation and social condition. How desirous we should be to promote their sanctification and salvation, to secure their temporal well-being and eternal happiness.

Above all, however, we should be filled with a tender love for our fellow Religious. We must consider that every member of our holy Institute is truly our brother, much more so, incomparably more so, than those who have the same natural mother. Do we foster towards each one a truly fraternal affection? Are we not sometimes lacking in sympathy towards them, without interest in their work, without concern for their afflictions, ascribing their poor health to a disordered imagination and setting down their personal views to an ill-balanced mind? Do we, perhaps, forget ourselves so far as to speak disparagingly of them to our own or to outsiders, in private or in public, belittling their doings, ridiculing their opinions, or misrepresenting their intentions? and this not merely through thoughtlessness or levity but even through envy or resentment? Oh, may there never be found in this Community any Religious to whom St. Paul might have referred when he wrote to Timothy, "If a man has no care even of those belonging to his own household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an infidel."

Or again, with regard to our Companions, are we not unduly biased by natural qualities, do we not pay too much attention to outward looks or inward accomplishments? These commonplace things should not be allowed to enter into comparison with the sublime qualifications of a chosen disciple of Jesus, a beloved

child of Mary, a fellow soldier for Heaven, striving together with us, by the same Life and the same Vows, after the Highest Sanctity, after the most Perfect Charity, after the Greatest Glory of God, and who like ourselves, as we firmly hope, will one day be admitted to share for all eternity in the Bliss and Triumph of our Adorable King.

Lastly, from among the persons who belong to these three classes, namely, the sinful, the faithful, and the members of our own Institute, we may yet form a fourth class, that of our benefactors. Gratitude for benefits received is a serious duty. We should never forget how much we owe individually to our parents, to our teachers, to our pastors, and to many other persons, in view of what they did for us whilst we were yet living in the world. Likewise, we should bear constantly in mind our ever-growing indebtedness to Superiors, Officials, and Members of our own Community. How sincere our gratitude should be for their loving labors on our behalf, in providing day after day whatever is needful for our maintenance and our well-being. Besides, almost every Religious House has a number of benefactors, both lay and clerical; and though the Constitutions of the Order make suitable provision that all gifts and services be duly acknowledged and remembered, yet each inmate of the House should take care daily to implore the blessings of Heaven upon these generous friends.

How to Love.

By Prayer and Penance.—If we can do nothing else to satisfy the claims of charity, at least we can pray. Let us be convinced of this, that if any of the sixteen hundred million men now living are to save their souls, it will be owing principally to prayer, to hum-

ble, confident, fervent, persevering prayer. Especially, therefore, at Mass and Communion, let us pray for all our brethren with that childlike importunity and that holy vehemence which are so pleasing to our Heavenly Father. Why can we not take the habit of daily offering ourselves during the Holy Sacrifice, with the utmost energy of which we are capable, to suffer anything and everything for the good of souls, for the conversion of sinners, for the sanctification of the faithful, for the advancement of our Companions and Superiors? And our prayer will grow the more efficacious, the more generous we become in the exercise of penance, in the practice of mortification and the acceptance of humiliation.

Oh, to think that on our own Holiness—on the Holiness of each one of us—Divine Providence has made depend the Salvation of some and the Sanctification of others, who, unless we reach the intended degree of Perfection, will not be saved, will not be sanctified! And the greater our progress on the road to Sanctity, the more souls we shall help render eternally happy. Our occupations, our infirmities, our age, far from being insurmountable obstacles to our spiritual fruitfulness, as we fondly fancy, are in reality, every one of them, powerful aids and indispensable means. Can there be any consideration more apt to inflame our souls with an impetuous and insatiable longing after Holiness?

Again, it is by lowly and fervent Supplication and by diligently gaining the Indulgences attached to various devotions, that we can give immense assistance to the Souls in Purgatory, abate the fierceness of those cleansing flames, relieve the mortal sadness of that spiritual prison, and usher them into the blissful presence of our Heavenly Father. Since Holy

Church is so merciful, so compassionate, and so prodigal of her supernatural treasures, why can we not avail ourselves somewhat better of her astounding liberality? It is so easy to gain Indulgences, even plenary ones; all that is needed on our part is a little care and a valid intention. Let us frequently and from our heart renew the so-called "Heroic Act of Charity for the Souls in Purgatory," and let us make sure for the future not to lose a single opportunity of consoling these poor, suffering Brethren of ours, these dearly beloved Children of God.

By our Labors and Sufferings.—We are busy people, we are working the whole day, and every day of the year. Now, all this labor, whatever be its character, whether corporal or mental, obscure or conspicuous, is directed toward one single object, the Salvation and Sanctification of Souls. But oh! how often we forget this, how seldom we animate ourselves by this grand thought, this certain truth, that through our cooking, serving, sweeping, and washing, or through our ploughing, planting, harvesting and pruning, or through our study, teaching, book-keeping, and correspondence, we are all cooperating in that most divine work of Redemption, and contributing to the Justification and Perfection of Souls who otherwise would remain unjustified and imperfect. If we did but think of this, how joyful and light all this toil would become; how little we should mind heat and cold, inconvenience and fatigue, illness and accident; how careful we should be to avoid the least defect in our appointed tasks; and how desirous of reaching in the discharge of our duties the very summit of Holy Obedience! All for the sake of Jesus, and for the good of those souls whom He loves so tenderly.

But, besides, we must always be on the lookout to render everybody all sorts of services, to assist our Religious Companions and our fellow men in a thousand little ways, with sincere humility and unobtrusive kindness; quick to anticipate and supply their various needs and wishes; prompt to detect and remove accidental obstacles to their peace and comfort; prepared to enlighten and correct the erring with prudent affability and hopeful perseverance; ready to encourage and console the downcast with delicate sweetness and tactful simplicity; glad to promote the recognition of merit which otherwise might remain unnoticed; and intent, on every occasion and by every lawful means, upon making those round about us as cheerful and happy as possible. Oh! let us not despise these apparent trifles. They constituted the ordinary practice of the Saints to win souls to God, nor are we to imagine for a moment that our Blessed Lord acted differently. We shall never perform great things unless we first apply ourselves to do these little things. In fact, the greatest thing that most of us, if not all, will ever be called upon to do, is precisely to be constant and diligent and enthusiastic in doing these apparently little things. Each of these trifling actions done in love, though unknown to the rest of mankind, is of inestimable value in the sight of the Most High; while those showy works which for a time call forth so much applause and admiration are often of no account before the Sovereign Majesty. For, whatever we do to the least of His brethren, Jesus will look upon as done to Himself. Though God does not need our service, yet He desires us to serve Him in the person of our neighbor.

Yet especially should we practise Charity by refraining most carefully from whatever might cause

others pain, disappointment, inconvenience, or embarrassment. The instinct of love is all mildness, forbearance, condescension, humility; it is averse to everything haughty, impatient, or harsh; it shuns whatever savors of incivility, rudeness, sarcasm, ridicule, aggressiveness, or impertinence. If we had experienced only once what it is to love, how clear this would be to us! True love, while it enlightens the mind and makes it discover innumerable ways of doing good, at the same time enchains the heart and robs it of its liberty to act otherwise. It really makes us slaves, but slaves by choice and from joy, not slaves by force or from fear. Henceforth, then, no more rash suspicions, no more unfavorable constructions, no more offensive remarks, no more stinging replies, no more apathetic silence, and no more selfish complaints. For we should never add our own to another's burden, each one has enough to bear. Let us rather strive to lighten our brother's load, by drawing his attention to the true aspect of this earthly pilgrimage or to the solid motives of patience and confidence.

By Word and Example.—Our love, however, must not stop short at devotedly rendering every kind of service and scrupulously avoiding everything that might cause annoyance or sorrow. No; we should also exert ourselves, both by word and by example, to do positive good, real, lasting, supernatural good. If only our hearts were animated by a genuine contempt for things perishable and filled with a sincere esteem for things eternal and inflamed with an ardent love of God our Lord, how easy it would be to benefit our neighbor, our brother, by conversation! It would flow so spontaneously, so gracefully, that it could not possibly fail to influence him for the better. And the

same holds true of our example. In other words, our own sanctification, that is, after all, the great means of doing good, in fact, the only efficacious means. If we appear to do good in any other way, it will not prove solid and durable, but just as superficial and ephemeral as our varnish of piety. We cannot give to others what we ourselves do not possess;—a maxim as plain as daylight, yet apparently very difficult at times to realize.

Let us, then, lay the ax to the root, and manfully cut off all earthly attachments, all worldly ambition; let us strain every sinew to advance daily, at least a few steps, in poverty, chastity, and obedience, in the contempt of self and the imitation of Christ. And while we feel conscious that as yet we can do but little good, let us at any rate beware of working evil, of disedifying and scandalizing others by our speech or action. This surely we can and must avoid. Should it nevertheless happen that, through human frailty, we give spiritual offense to our brother, let us not fail to make for it as soon as possible a suitable reparation. If we have the excellent habit of humbling ourselves for breaking a bit of earthenware or damaging a piece of furniture, how much more reason we have to ask a penance if we rend asunder the precious mantle of Charity! In any case, let us take efficient measures to undo, as far as lies in us, the harm we may have caused.

In conclusion, let us all strive to lead a life of love. To lead a life of love is to lead a life of happiness, or rather, it constitutes a real prelude to Life Eternal. It is to lead the life of a Saint, the life of the Blessed Virgin Mary, the life of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. May, then, my entire existence as far as possible be taken up with Love: love in prayer and in labor, love

in rest and in recreation, love in health and in sickness, love in joy and in sorrow, love in success and in failure, love in light and in darkness; may I love at every moment of my life. May I love all men from the least to the greatest, beginning with those of my own household, the members of my own Community, my own Institute; and for the rest seeking out the poor, the ignorant, the infirm, the suffering, and the dying. May I love all in God and God in all. May I be wholly possessed, may I be wholly consumed by love. May my every thought, my every desire, my every breath, my every pulsation, be an act of the most pure, most tender, and most generous love. May my First and Universal and Supreme Rule be the Law of Love, the Precept of Charity: "You shall love the Lord your God with your whole mind, with your whole heart, with your whole soul, and with your whole strength; and you shall love your neighbor as yourself; yea, even as I have loved you."

DIVINE LOVE

Introductory Remarks.—Charity is the supernatural love of friendship between God and man. It is a mutual love of benevolence, involving a communication of goods between the Lover and the Beloved. This love of benevolence, on our part, consists in sincerely and effectually wishing Him every kind of good. It comprises, therefore, three distinct acts. First; Complacency or Joy in the goods God already possesses, His Power, Wisdom, Holiness, and other Attributes, as well as the Glory given Him by His creatures, the spread of His Kingdom, the sanctification of His Church, the happiness of His Saints. To this corresponds Grief on account of our own and other men's sins. Secondly; Benevolence in the strict sense, or the Desire of augmenting, as far as lies in us, the goods possessed by God; which can only be hypothetical with regard to His Intrinsic Perfections, since being Infinite they are incapable of any increase; but which should be absolute with reference to His Extrinsic Glory. To this corresponds Hatred and Detestation of sin, or the Fear of the Lord. Thirdly; Beneficence or Zeal for the Glory of God, not only forcibly repelling whatever is contrary or detrimental to the Divine Honor, but also energetically striving to promote it by every possible means; both in ourselves—by the extinction of the guilt, penalty, and effects of sin; by our compliance with God's commandments, counsels, intentions; by the practice of all the virtues;—and in others, by prayer,

word, example, service, and suffering. Hence we see that Love ought to be found in deeds and sacrifices rather than in words and feelings. The recalling of these elementary notions about the true nature of Charity will assist us to draw greater profit from the "Contemplation to obtain Love," which forms the sublime conclusion of the Spiritual Exercises.

Subject of this Meditation.—Charity, or the Love of Benevolence towards God in Himself, which we are all enabled to elicit by sanctifying grace, and which, in its exercise, may gradually rise from the ordinary prayer of the faithful to the transforming union of the saints.

Composition of Place.—Myself standing before God my Creator, seated in light inaccessible above the countless multitudes of glorious Angels and blissful Saints, who are actually interceding for me at the throne of the Most High.—"Standing," that is, ready for any act of service, any token of love, which the Eternal Lord may be pleased to accept.

Petition.—An intimate appreciation of the many proofs of the Goodness and Beauty of God, that I may in all things love and serve His Divine Majesty. There is evidently a close connection between this final grace of the Exercises and the ultimate fruit of the Foundation, "Desiring and choosing what is most conducive to the end for which we have been created."

First Point. How much God our Lord has given me of His own Possessions: the Benefits of Creation, the Benefits of Redemption, and Particular Benefits.

The Benefits of Creation.—God in the beginning

created for me this beautiful universe, the earth to be my temporary habitation, the plants to feed and clothe me, the animals for my sustenance, assistance, and diversion. Whatever things are of any service to me, constitute so many physical, intellectual, or moral gifts. To realize the value of each Gift, I may suppose its entire absence or sudden privation. Besides, after meditating on what I myself have received, I should also reflect upon what has been granted to so many millions of my fellow men. For we are all bound together by the bonds of a common origin, we form all one mighty family, we are all brothers, both by Nature and much more by Grace. The goods of each, therefore, are the goods of all; and the goods of all are the goods of each.

Accordingly, every breath I draw, every motion I make, every beating of my heart, every thought of my mind, every aspiration of my will, every moment of my life, is a Gift of God. Every particle of food that nourishes me, every drop of water that refreshes me, every ray of sunshine that warms me, is a Gift of God. Every savor that pleases my palate, every odor that gratifies my sense of smell, every color that charms my eye, every sound that delights my ear, every truth that enriches my mind, every kindness that captivates my heart, is a Gift of God. And all these innumerable Gifts are entirely gratuitous, being intended for me, not only without any antecedent merit, but even in spite of much subsequent demerit, and lavished on me notwithstanding my baseness, my selfishness, and my sinfulness, by Him Who is infinitely Great, Good, and Holy. But what I should ponder especially is the measureless Love with which they are bestowed by God; and from this I should strive to realize how earnestly He desires to give me Himself, in so far as

I can become capable of receiving Him and is compatible with His Absolute Sovereignty.

The Benefits of Redemption.—Here I should briefly but vividly recall the Incarnation, Life, Passion, and Death of Jesus, my Adorable Savior; the Catholic Church and the Sacraments, especially the Blessed Eucharist; Sanctifying Grace, the virtues of Faith, Hope, and Charity, the seven Gifts of the Divine Spirit; my soul made a tabernacle of the Eternal Lord, a sanctuary of the most Holy Trinity; the prayers of the Faithful, the examples of the Saints, the intercession of the Blessed, the protection of my Guardian Angel, the solicitude of the Immaculate Virgin, Mother of God and also my Mother. How priceless is every single one of these Supernatural Favors! and how significant a pledge of that everlasting enjoyment of the Sovereign Good which has been promised to all sincere Christians!

Particular Benefits.—Among these I should reckon first, my Religious Vocation, the proof of God's mysterious Predilection, bestowed on me in spite of so many sins and infidelities; then, the numerous interior graces, such as lights and inspirations, as well as the abundant exterior helps, such as parents, teachers, advisers, books, sermons, incidents, all gradually and gently preparing me for the Divine Call; further, the still more liberal graces and helps received in this Holy State, ever since I entered the novitiate, particularly the training of an experienced and saintly Master of Novices, the instructions and exhortations of Directors, the counsels and corrections of Superiors, my successive annual Retreats; and lastly, these actual Spiritual Exercises.

How can I ever admire sufficiently the goodness of Almighty God showering down such beautiful and

varied Benefits, in such ceaseless profusion, on one so utterly unworthy? Yet, incomparably more wonderful than all His Gifts is His vehement longing to give me as far as possible Himself. Let me, then, "reflect what I ought to offer and give to His Divine Majesty; namely, myself together with whatever is mine." How reasonable it is that I should make the most complete return for so many Gifts, granted so freely and so lovingly, by Him, the infinitely Great God, to me a mere nothing, a despicable sinner; and also how just, since He could not bestow these Benefits upon me for any other purpose than His own Service and Glory! In fact, my human greatness, my royal nobility, my priestly dignity, lies precisely in being privileged to make this return of love to the Most High.

I must give Him, then, not only all I have, but my very self. This complete donation of myself I have already made by the Sacred Vows of Religion; but it remains for me to confirm it daily more and more by the Perfect Observance of these Solemn Promises as well as of my Holy Rules. My God and my All! He longs to become mine, as far as this is feasible to the Creator; and I long to be His, wholly, absolutely, forever. With profound humility, therefore, and with tender affection, I will say after St. Ignatius: "Take, O Lord, and receive all my liberty, my memory, my intellect, and my volition; whatever I have and possess. Thou hast given me all these things; to Thee, O Lord, I restore them; and as they are now doubly Thine, I beg Thee, dispose of them according to Thy Good Pleasure."

Yes, O Lord, freely dispose of everything, my time, my talents, my body, my senses, my mind, my will, my health, and my very life. For the future, my only

thought, my only care, shall be how to do Thy most Holy Will, at the merest sign, even in the smallest matter, with all the energy of my being, with the deepest reverence and the greatest eagerness, at the cost of any hardship or ignominy! And I will begin to carry out my self-immolation without delay, from this very instant. For the Adorable Will of God is unmistakably made known to me by the dispositions of His Fatherly Providence, by the example of Christ our Lord, by the supreme law of Fraternal Charity, by the prescriptions of my Rules, the duties of my Status, and the arrangements of my Superiors. But it is, in particular, by practising Perfect Obedience that I can best substantiate this complete donation of myself to the Ever-Blessed Trinity.

However, the value of this self-dedication is entirely dependent on the intensity of my love for God. One way to enkindle Love is sincere Gratitude, the other way is earnest Petition. I must, then, pray for it with the utmost constancy; I must beg for it with the firmest confidence; I must implore it with the greatest ardor; after the example of St. Ignatius, I must importune my Heavenly Father with the most fervent supplication: "O Lord, only give me Thy Love and Thy Grace, for this—namely, to love Thee in word and deed—this is all I care for, this alone and nothing else will do." And if now I find that my soul is lovingly centered on God, I should pause here as long as possible exercising myself in this holy Love.

Second Point. How God Dwells for Me in all Creatures.

A lover not only Gives whatever he has, but also strives to be constantly near the beloved, at least in

thought; and God, through His free act of creation, subjected Himself to this law of Love. God is everywhere by His essence, by His knowledge, and by His power; He is Present in stones and in metals, in liquids and in vapors, in herbs and in trees, in flowers and in fruits, in fishes and in birds, in reptiles and in quadrupeds, in Angels and in men. His Presence is manifested by their very existence; by their physical qualities; by their life, strength, and sensation; by their learning, affection, and authority; by their supernatural virtues and heavenly graces. Especially, therefore, is He Present to me in my fellow Religious and in my Superiors. But most intimately is He Present to me in my own Heart. In fact, my Body is the Temple of the Ever-Blessed Trinity, while the Holy Ghost dwells like a most devoted Friend in my Soul.

This universal and immediate Presence of God means an infinitely loving watchfulness, an ineffably tender solicitude—Divine Providence—which extends even to the minutest and most trifling details, or in the words of our Blessed Lord, to the very hairs of my head. I am surrounded by this Loving Presence of God, I am immersed in it, for “in Him we live, and move, and have our being.”

However, God subjected Himself to this law of Love in yet another and, to the human mind, far more striking way. He took the form of a servant; He dwelled on this earth for a number of years; and He not only remains still with me personally Present, both as God and as Man, in the Adorable Eucharist, but actually descends into my bosom, by Holy Communion.

I too, then, if I really love God, if I sincerely desire to advance in His love, I too must by all means strive

to be ever mindful of Him, to think, speak, and act in His Sacred Presence. I must keep Present to Jesus in the Holy Eucharist, by frequent and diligent Visits from early morning till late at night, and particularly by daily, fervent Communions made with longing preparation and humble thanksgiving. Even while engaged in my usual duties, even while passing through the public streets, my heart must keep conversing with Jesus, my Divine Lover. I must also watch over my Body as His Temple and over my Soul as His Sanctuary, with the greatest care and reverence, by checking every unguarded movement and disorderly emotion, by fleeing in horror from every semblance or approach of sin. Besides, I must be constantly on the alert to see God in all His creatures, and them all in Him; I must strive to honor Him in my fellow men and in my Religious Companions; but I must especially revere Him in my Superiors, by yielding them Perfect Obedience.—Renewed Dedication of Self and Petition for Love.

Third Point. How God Labors for Me in all Creatures.

Love is always Active. Just as a lover is ever laboring for the beloved, so God is, as it were, ever laboring for me in all His creatures. Every change, every movement, every development, every growth, is an effect of this Divine Labor. Who causes the dawn to appear on the horizon? Who kindles the myriad stars in the nightly firmament? Who gathers the storm-clouds and sends down the copious rains? Who guides the waters from the mountains to the sea? Who diffuses the light that lends color to every object? Who gives vigor to the seeds of so many tribes of plants? Who makes the blood circulate in such a

countless host of animals? It is God Who labors in all these ways for me. And thus He has Labored from the very beginning of the world, directing His whole activity towards my service, my well-being. With Infinite Wisdom, Power, and Love, He has been arranging everything for my benefit, for my happiness.

God Labors for me, not only directly, in the elements, plants, and animals; but also indirectly through men, my Religious Brethren, my various Superiors, and through the Heavenly Spirits, especially my Angel Guardian and Patron Saints. Their service, their esteem, their affection is all a result of His Labor. And how many creatures day after day combine their exertion,—which is wholly derived from Him and in which He constantly participates,—in order to provide me with food, clothing, shelter, comfort, pleasure, and information!

Besides, what is yet far more astounding, Jesus, true God and true Man, Labored and Suffered for me, from the moment of His Incarnation till His death on the Cross. Even now He Labors for me after a mystic manner in the Blessed Eucharist. Also the Holy Ghost Labors in my mind and will, by continual inspirations and numberless graces, for my sanctification and perfection. In every act of supernatural virtue I perform, this Adorable Spirit Cooperates. Truly, Love and Service are inseparable.

In imitation of this Divine Example and in return for this Divine Service, I too must always Labor by using my senses, my faculties, my talents, for the Glory of God and for the Salvation of His beloved Children. Giving freely what I have freely received, I must strive to become all to all. I must ever Labor for Him by the perfect accomplishment of His Ador-

able Will. In one word, I must henceforth devote all my energy to the practice of Religious Obedience and the exercise of Fraternal Charity. How, indeed, can we better correspond to this wondrous manifestation of Divine Love, how can we more efficiently Labor for our Heavenly Father than by gladly spending ourselves, conformably to the directions of our Superiors, in spiritual or corporal works of mercy, and by embracing most eagerly those offices which involve the hardest toil or the humblest service?—Renewed Consecration of Self and Prayer for Love.

Fourth Point. How Lovable God is in Himself.

God is not only most loving towards each one of us, as shown by His numberless Gifts, by His intimate Presence, by His unceasing Labor, but, besides, He is infinitely Lovable in Himself. To realize somewhat this Divine Loveliness, we must strive to rise gradually from the creatures to the Creator; observing the beauty of nature in the different realms of the physical universe; the beauty of the Human Soul and of the Angelic Spirit; the beauty of Mary, Queen of heaven and earth; the beauty of Jesus in His Sacred Humanity enthroned at the right hand of the Eternal Father; finally to rest in adoration before the Ever-Blessed Trinity, Inexhaustible Source of all beauty, infinitely surpassing even the most exalted creatures.

How interesting is even a grain of sand, or a bit of mineral, when examined and analyzed with scientific instruments! Even after at least six thousand years of study, we barely know something of what lies just on the surface of these physical objects. How is a particle of matter made up? What is the constitution of an atom? Some time ago, scientists practically gave up the search by formulating

the atomic theory, but the recent discovery of radium unsettled their comfortable hypothesis and emphasized once more man's prodigious ignorance. How scanty, then, is our knowledge of the terrestrial globe, the sun, the planets, the comets, the nebulae, and the millions or rather billions of so-called fixed stars? Yet, at a mere glance, we see what grandeur and beauty is scattered broadcast over the whole earth, in rivers, lakes, and oceans, in meadows, woods, and mountains.

But passing from the mineral realm to the vegetable kingdom, what inscrutable mysteries we meet even in a blade of grass or in a little flower! What do we know about plants, their forces, their qualities? Botany is little else but a long list of Latin names. All the ablest students and experimenters of the whole world together could not produce one living cell of protoplasm. And zoology, our knowledge of the animal kingdom, is still more superficial. Yet how wonderful is even the most common insect, a fly! How incalculably more perfect any one of these tiny creatures is than our most improved airplane or latest-launched dirigible! What astounding beauty, therefore, a more profound acquaintance would detect in the fauna and flora of the entire earth.

This physical universe, however, though so magnificent to behold and so interesting to study, is only a most distant imitation of the Divine Perfection and as such immensely inferior to the world of spirits, even to a single human soul. Our faculties being so feeble and limited, we are wholly unequal to the gigantic task of exploring these loftier and still more mysterious fields of knowledge. The one thing we realize is this, that the intelligent creation must be immeasurably more noble, more beautiful, more ad-

mirable, than the irrational creation, about which, as we have seen, in spite of more than six thousand years of constant experience and diligent investigation, we still know next to nothing. For the rest, neither philosophy in its fascinating treatises about the angelic nature, intelligence, and volition, nor history in its splendid records of human talents, virtues, and achievements, can pretend to give us more than mere glimpses of the spiritual universe.

But now, rising from the whole natural creation, rational as well as irrational, mind and matter, to the Supernatural World, the realm of Sanctifying Grace and Heavenly Favors, the assemblage of all those privileged beings that actually share with Christ in the Life Divine, we stand utterly helpless before an impassable gulf. Once again, about the only thing we clearly recognize is that, in the Supernatural Order, the marvels of God's activity are incomparably far above whatever He does in Nature, in matter or mind, in man or angel. Here the most eloquent tongue can do no more than stammer and the keenest intellect staggers under the weight of mystery. The few facts made known to us by revelation, we apprehend only under very imperfect figures; and it is not until we see them illustrated in the conduct of the Saints, in the career of the Most Holy Virgin, or in the life of our Blessed Savior, that we gain some little insight into the ineffable workings of Divine Grace, into the ravishing beauty of the Elect, into the dazzling glory of their Queen and Mother, Mary Immaculate, the masterpiece of the Adorable Trinity, into the sovereign majesty of Him Who was from all eternity the primary object of the Uncreated Love, the Sacred Humanity of our Lord Jesus Christ,

Lastly, combining into one whole these different creations, the Material and the Spiritual, the Natural and the Supernatural, with all their boundless charms, all their fathomless wonders, and gathering these myriad effects of the Divine Omnipotence into one immense universe of inconceivable variety, harmony, excellence, and splendor, even so we have nothing but a faint image of the absolutely Infinite Perfection, Power, Goodness, Loveliness of the Triune God.

And this Supreme Being to save my soul became Man, and to expiate my hideous sins died for me on a Cross. This Adorable Master, having called me to the paradise of Religion, still stays with me in the Blessed Eucharist, continually sacrifices Himself for me in Holy Mass, daily gives Himself to me in Sacramental Communion. By Creative Agency I was formed to His likeness and placed in the condition of a servant. But by Sanctifying Grace I received a true participation in His Immutable Nature, I became a child of God the Father, a brother of God the Son, a friend of God the Holy Ghost. And all this is yet to be completed in a short while, when I shall be actually admitted to the glorious Society of the Saints and Angels, to the very Family of the Ever-Blessed Trinity, to the most intimate Union with the Three Divine Persons; when, through the beatific vision, I shall forever be filled with the purest love and peace and happiness. With what confidence, then, and with what energy, I should strive to become more and more perfect after the pattern of my Eternal Father, more and more conformable in my whole conduct to my Adorable Brother, more and more docile and devoted to my Heavenly Spouse!

Colloquy.—After renewing with great fervor my

Vows and my Resolutions, I will offer to the Adorable Trinity all the Affection of devout Christians, of holy Souls, of blessed Saints and Angels, of the Immaculate Virgin Mary, of the Sacred Heart of Jesus; wishing that I could gather into my own wretched, sinful heart the Love of all the Children of God and thus make some return to my most Amiable Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier. Oh, that I were already burning with the fire of Divine Love! How I should long for the day when I may be admitted to behold Him, my Eternal Lord, face to face, and to be inebriated forever with His infinite Goodness and Beauty; when there will be no more danger of losing Him, no more possibility of displeasing Him, when I shall be irresistibly drawn to love Him without any distraction, without any intermission, as He Himself has deigned to command me, with my whole heart, with my whole soul, with my whole mind, and with all my strength. But meanwhile, with the help of His grace, I will Love Him here on earth, as I have now learned better and understood more clearly, by daily embracing the Cross of Suffering and Contempt, in Perfect Obedience to His Adorable Will, for the Everlasting Happiness of His Beloved Children, and for the Greater Glory of His Divine Majesty; in one word, I will become a saint.—I will conclude with an Our Father, the most appropriate prayer for a Child of God.

THE END

APPENDIX

Of the three meditations contained in this appendix, either the first or the second may be found serviceable for the morning of the day after the Retreat. The third meditation has been added for the convenience of those who wish to follow up the exercises on Sin with the consideration of Death; in which case, by way of compensation, they may omit the meditation on Mary Magdalen. The list of books, which is necessarily very incomplete, may be found helpful to select suitable reading-matter for Community Retreats.

DEVOTION TO THE BLESSED VIRGIN

Introductory Remarks.—Those who by a singular favor of God have been called to be the chosen companions of Jesus seem with the very grace of their Vocation to receive a spirit of filial reverence and affection for Mary, His most Holy Mother. And as, with increasing years of Religious Life, they begin to grasp more fully the wonderful union which exists between that Son and that Mother, they also realize more intimately the essential connection which their Devotion to Mary has with their Conformity to Jesus, with the one supreme object of all their thoughts and desires, of all their prayers and penances. But what do we really understand by this Devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary?

By Devotion in general, as all will readily grant, we mean a certain attachment to an object or person that is worthy of our esteem and affection, an attachment which does not remain hidden in the depths of our heart but manifests itself on suitable occasions in our words and deeds. Hence it is plain that Devotion is not a mere matter of sentiment. Feeling or sentiment may give rise to Devotion and undoubtedly forms its accidental ornament, but it does not supply its substantial core. A supernatural attachment, such as Devotion to the Holy Mother of God, which should consist merely of sentiment, would be little better than sheer illusion; it would be the outward

semblance without the inward essence. On the other hand, such an attachment solidly founded on motives of esteem and affection but without the beautiful finish of human feeling, though certainly not amounting to a perfect Devotion, would still be something very beneficial to our own soul and very pleasing to our Heavenly Mother. Let us, therefore, strive to understand thoroughly the reasons we have for revering and loving Mary, the Immaculate Virgin, and for the rest look forward to everlasting bliss as the condition in which, after the final resurrection, our Devotion will reach its full maturity, its ultimate perfection, when the body with its wonderful powers will be brought into complete and permanent harmony with all the noblest aspirations of the soul.

Yet mere esteem and affection would not constitute Devotion. A third factor is wanted. When St. Ignatius, in the Second Week of the Exercises, directs us to beg for a more intimate knowledge of our Lord, in order that we may love Him more ardently and follow Him more closely, we realize, even though he does not use the word, that what he wishes us to implore is a more intense Devotion to Jesus, our Adorable King. If so, we shall not be far wrong in defining Devotion to Mary, a Reverential and Loving Imitation of our Heavenly Queen and Mother. In fact, the idea of Devotion contains three distinct elements, namely, veneration, affection, and service; and though St. Thomas Aquinas makes Devotion to God consist in a ready will to do whatever may promote His glory, yet it is clear that this readiness of the will postulates a mind appreciative of the Divine Excellence, and an activity directed continually towards the Divine Service.

Subject of this Meditation.—Our reasons for revering Mary, our motives for loving Mary, and our means of imitating Mary.

Composition of Place.—The town of Nazareth, the house of the Blessed Virgin, the room of the Annunciation.

Petition.—A more solid, more tender, and more active devotion to the Mother of God, Mary Immaculate.

First Point. Our Reasons for Revering Mary.

Since the Blessed Virgin is the most perfect and most exalted of all purely created beings, it cannot be difficult to assign some special claims she has to our Reverence. The first that naturally offers itself for our consideration is her Sinlessness. While all other men, the moment they come into existence, are infected by those baneful consequences of the disobedience of Adam which we comprehend under the term “original sin,” Mary, by a marvelous favor conferred on her in view of the merits of her future Son, the Divine Redeemer, was preserved from contracting this hereditary stain. In other words, being the Woman destined to crush the power of Satan, she was conceived Immaculate. At the same time, the Holy Mother of God was completely exempt from concupiscence, that undue inclination towards the goods of earth, towards the pleasures of sense, towards the worship of self, which draws man to evil by forestalling and obscuring his reason. And what is more, by another most wonderful privilege, Mary ever kept her soul free from the slightest actual sin, nay even from the smallest inordination, that is, she never for

a moment swerved in the least from the Will of her Creator, but corresponded to every indication of it with absolute fidelity and accomplished it with the combined energy of her entire being.

But Sinlessness, after all, is only a negative perfection and, strictly speaking, admits of no degrees. Let us, therefore, turn our attention to something positive, namely Grace. "A creature," says St. Thomas, "receives so much the more Grace as it is more closely united to God." Now, never was man or angel admitted to so close a union with God as Mary enjoyed at the very dawn of her existence, destined as she was from all eternity to become the Mother of the Incarnate Word; and, hence, we need not wonder if the Doctors of the Church maintain that the Grace bestowed on our Blessed Lady in her first sanctification was more abundant than that reached by the greatest Saint or the highest Seraph at the consummation of their merits. Indeed, not a few Theologians even hold that the Grace lavished on the Immaculate Virgin in the moment of her Conception exceeded all the Grace ever to be possessed by the whole assembly of men and angels arrived at the summit of their Perfection. Whichever view we may adopt, we should bear in mind that Grace is not measured by quantity but by intensity. This initial wealth of Sanctifying Grace was accompanied by a proportionate infusion of the theological and moral Virtues,—faith, hope, charity, prudence, justice, humility, fortitude,—as well as a most copious outpouring of the seven Gifts of the Holy Ghost. And since the Blessed Virgin had from the outset the full use of her faculties, she entered immediately upon that perfect correspondence to all these Divine Favors which caused them to be multiplied at every successive in-

stant of her earthly existence. In attempting to gaze at such fulness of Grace, at such loftiness of Sanctity, our mind is completely dazzled.

Yet, in addition to her absolute Sinlessness and surpassing Grace, Mary possesses still another and more powerful title to our Reverence, and that is her inconceivable Dignity of Mother of God. Inconceivable, not only to the human mind and angelic spirit, but even to the Ever-Blessed Virgin herself. God alone knows the true Greatness of Mary, His Mother, because He alone knows His own Infinite Greatness. But for us, just as the Incarnation of the Second Person of the Trinity will forever remain an unfathomable mystery, so will proportionately the Dignity of the Mother of the Incarnate Word. Mary participates in the Divine Excellence not only in a higher degree than the other Blessed, but also in a mode altogether distinct and unique. Hence, whoever admits that the Adoration we give to God, our Sovereign Lord, can never become excessive, must also grant that the Reverence we owe to Mary, His favorite creature, can never be exaggerated. This fact, that she is the Mother of God, is the foundation of her marvelous Holiness, of her absolute Freedom from Sin and her perfect Fulness of Grace. Hail, then, Virgin Immaculate, Mary, Full of Grace, Mother of our Creator and Redeemer!

Second Point. Our Motives for Loving Mary.

Here again we must limit ourselves to a cursory review of such motives as obtain exclusively in the case of the Blessed Virgin. While all men claim our sincere good-will, because they are made to the image and likeness of God, because they are enabled by grace to enter as children of adoption the very fam-

ily of God, and also because they are loved accordingly by God Himself; Mary deserves our warmest Affection, because she is the most admirable Masterpiece of the Almighty Father, because she has been admitted to the most intimate Relationship of Mother of the Eternal Son, and because she is consequently the most tenderly cherished Spouse of the Holy Ghost. We ought to love our neighbor because he is really lovable, but the Blessed Virgin is incomparably more lovable than any other creature, while God is infinitely more Lovable than all. Hence that personal Love of Jesus which we are taught by St. Ignatius to carry to the point of embracing for His sake poverty and pain, contempt and insult, that personal Love can never burn in the heart of a Religious without a correspondingly ardent Affection for Mary.

Again, the Blessed Virgin is also most closely associated with our Adorable Savior, as the Coredemptrix of the human race. It is usual, in explaining the difference between the Sacrifice of the Cross and the Sacrifice of the Mass, to point out that on Calvary Jesus was the only Priest just as He was the only Victim, while on the Altar He is assisted under both these aspects by the Faithful present and even by the entire Church. Yet this is true only in so far as Jesus and Mary, in that awful tragedy of Golgotha, constituted practically but one moral agent, one Priest as well as one Victim. Jesus was not absolutely alone in offering Himself on the Cross for our redemption. There stood by the Cross of Christ His Sorrowful Mother. Mary intimately realized the wonderful mystery that was being accomplished on Calvary, and as formerly at the Annunciation she had given her humble consent to the miraculous Incar-

nation of the Eternal Word, so now at the Crucifixion she generously joined in the fearful Holocaust of her Divine Son. Thus the share she has in the salvation of the world is not only surpassing great, but also quite indispensable and altogether singular. And hence, while the mere recollection of the torments and ignominy of the Cross, the sight of a Crucifix or the act of Blessing ourselves, ought to fill our hearts with contrite Love for Jesus, our Adorable Redeemer, it should also kindle them with grateful Affection for Mary, our heroic Coredemptrix.

There is still a third motive why we should Love the Blessed Virgin, one which, humanly speaking, appeals to us more forcibly than any other. Mary is also our Heavenly Mother. We are her beloved children,—yes, we in particular, the privileged members of Holy Church, the chosen companions of Christ Jesus. For each one of us she has labored and suffered while on earth, for each one she is now praying and pleading in Heaven. If we could gather up all our experiences of maternal care and realize all our recollections of motherly affection, and could multiply and intensify the resultant to the very borders of the infinite, we should still have but a very imperfect representation of the profound solicitude and ceaseless concern with which Mary watches over the welfare, the happiness, the salvation of even the least and lowliest descendent of Adam, of even the most reckless and hardened sinner. But who could venture to give an adequate idea of the tender love she cherishes for those who strive in all things to do the Perfect Will of her Adorable Lord, to become true followers of her Divine Son, for those who seek to be clothed with the same livery and to be spent in the same labors as Jesus Crucified? How real, then, in

return, how deep, how ardent our Affection should be for Mary, the singular Object of the power, wisdom, and love of the Most High, the chosen Coredemptrix of our fallen race, and our own most devoted Mother!

Third Point. Our Means of Imitating Mary.

If Reverence may be styled the stem of Devotion and Love its flower, Imitation may well be called its fruit. Surely, those who wish to be truly devoted to the Immaculate Virgin ought to regulate their conduct after her example. Tender sentiments and burning words are good, provided they are borne out by diligent action. Otherwise they are nothing but illusion and deceit. In what particulars, then, should we strive to Imitate Mary, our Queen and our Mother? Her earthly existence was preeminently a life of Prayer, of Humility, and of Sacrifice. Such, consequently, should be ours also.

A life of Prayer means a life of silence and recollection, of habitual watchfulness over self and constant communion with God. Even amongst those who have long since consecrated themselves entirely to the Divine Service and Glory, there are found some who seem to think an interior life incompatible with exterior activity. But their view, which runs counter to the unanimous teaching of ascetic writers, is based on a misconception, and a simple explanation may suffice to remove their difficulty. It cannot be denied that to form the habit of recollection or to foster the practice of Prayer, we have to lead, for a considerable time, a more or less retired existence, apart from the noise and bustle of the world. But once this inward discipline has been acquired, far from proving a hindrance to outward efficiency, it becomes one of its most powerful and enduring main-

springs. Witness the lives of the Saints, their ceaseless exertions and their astounding achievements. Besides, of what profit will our external labors be to our neighbor, if we are not internally united to God? How can a man pretend to communicate to others what he himself lacks? This is why every Religious Order affords its members constant opportunities for cultivating the spirit of Prayer. Let us strive to avail ourselves of them to the utmost, as loving clients and genuine children of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

Prayer puts the grace and light and energy we need within our reach, but without Humility we should have no capacity for receiving these heavenly treasures. Mary was full of Grace, because she was thoroughly Humble. In fact, among all her marvelous virtues, Humility stands out most conspicuous. It was the Humility of His Handmaid that induced the Most High to become her Son. Humility is at once the most fundamental and the most practicable of all the moral virtues. For it is nothing else than the habit of referring to God everything that is His, namely, whatever good we see in any creature, and to ourselves everything that is ours, namely, our own nothingness and sinfulness. Now, of this fact—that of ourselves we are worse than nothing—we are reminded unceasingly by every object that meets our gaze or falls under our notice: material imperfections and physical drawbacks, bodily ailments, mental defects, and moral shortcomings, trifling mishaps and big disasters, all keep repeating to us the same lesson. Hence we can humble ourselves inwardly as well as outwardly, whether alone or with others, at every moment of our conscious existence; the opportunities are never wanting. Humility being but the

intelligent and deliberate application of a self-evident truth that happens to be most unpleasant and repugnant to our fallen nature, Self-Humiliation constitutes the best panacea for all our spiritual miseries, the cursed brood of pride. For the sake, therefore, of the Blessed Virgin, in order to become more like to Her, our Heavenly Mother, and thus more truly her children, let us gladly welcome every occasion of self-denial, which is either a Humiliation of the body or a Humiliation of the soul.

But if Humility be so far-reaching, why not focus our devotion to Mary on the practice of this one virtue? Strictly speaking, there would be no objection, if only we had a perfectly adequate notion of Humility. But here lies the difficulty. Accordingly, a few words about Self-Sacrifice as a third means of Imitating the Immaculate Virgin will not be superfluous. If we study the word Devotion, we recognize that it is nearly synonymous with Sacrifice. However, since the Mother of God accepts our Devotion only on behalf of her Divine Son, the desire of Self-Sacrifice which it necessarily implies, will cause us to be immolated more and more completely, in union with her, for the Greater Glory of His Sovereign Majesty. And this leads us back once more to the wondrous Sacrifice of the Cross, in which, as we saw, Mary cooperated so intimately with Jesus, that while He is truly our sole Redeemer she merited nevertheless to become our Coredemptrix.

Since Holy Mass is the unbloody reenactment of the bloody Holocaust of Calvary, it is especially while assisting at the Sacred Mysteries that we should strive, after the example of Mary and through her intercession, to unite ourselves with our Divine Master, both as priests and as victims, by offering our body

and soul, our senses and faculties, our health, our liberty, and our very life, for the same ends for which He continues to offer Himself hourly on our altars; namely, adoration, impetration, and thanksgiving. And that this Self-Immolation in Holy Mass may become more and more sincere, generous, and perfect, let us at the same time earnestly beg for abundant grace to carry it out practically, throughout the ensuing day, by eagerly embracing every opportunity of suffering and contempt, especially such as may occur in the observance of our Rules, in the accomplishment of our Duties, in the practice of Obedience, and in the exercise of Charity. By thus imitating the Holy Mother of God in her Prayer, her Humility, and her Generosity, we shall prove our Devotion to consist not merely in Feelings or Words, but in earnest and fruitful Deeds.

Triple Colloquy.—First, with the Blessed Virgin Mary; in deep confusion and great confidence. Confusion; because of the immense difference between me and Her: She, my Mother, so holy, and I, her child, so wretched; She so rich in grace, and I so destitute; She the Coredemptrix of the world, the Queen of Apostles, and I worse than a useless servant, not only through the grave scandal caused by my past sins, but also by the bad example of my actual worldliness, selfishness, and pride. Confidence; because of her irresistible power with Christ our Savior: assuring me that through her protection I too shall once be admitted together with many others enlightened and encouraged by my endeavors, to the bliss of Heaven, and thus be united to Her for all eternity in the knowledge, love, and possession of God. Secondly, with Jesus, our Divine Lord; that He may deign

to communicate to me some of that profound veneration and tender affection which He has ever entertained for His Incomparable Mother. For, just as fervent imitation of Mary Immaculate leads necessarily to close union with Jesus Crucified, so nowhere better than in the Heart of her Adorable Son can we learn true filial Devotion to our Heavenly Mother. Thirdly, with the Eternal Father; that He may vouchsafe to bestow upon me all those virtues which should distinguish a genuine child of Mary, in such a degree that I may never think, say, or do anything which would be in the least displeasing to the Glorious Queen of Angels and of Saints.—Hail Mary. Anima Christi. Our Father.

THE BADGE OF PERSEVERANCE

Introductory Remarks.—"I will assign no measure and no limit to the gifts and graces which I will bestow on all that seek them in My Heart." Mindful of this solemn promise made by Christ our Lord to Saint Margaret Mary, we cannot hesitate to trust our perseverance to His Adorable Heart.

Subject of this Meditation.—The Sacred Heart Badge as a symbol of Religious Perfection and an aid to Final Perseverance.

Composition of Place.—The Chapel in which our Divine Lord appeared to Saint Margaret Mary Alacoque showing her His Sacred Heart, wounded, inflamed, surmounted by a cross, and encircled by a crown of thorns.

Petition.—Generous perseverance in my good resolutions, so that my heart may become daily more and more like to the Sacred Heart of Jesus by the diligent practice of poverty, chastity, obedience, regular observance, and complete self-denial.

First Point. The Wound, a Symbol of Poverty.

The large Wound in the Sacred Heart of Jesus, through which He poured forth even the last drop of His Blood, may well be taken as an eloquent symbol of that Perfect Poverty which He practised during His entire life, not possessing so much as a stone to

rest His head on and expiring in absolute destitution on the Cross. Surely no self-spoliation could go further than that of our Lord and Savior.

As a faithful companion I will strive to Imitate Him by embracing the Poverty proper to my Institute, in food, clothing, lodging, and all other details of common life; not admitting any superfluities but rejoicing when things happen to disagree with my personal tastes or even to be insufficient for my actual needs.

I will also strive to Imitate Him by keeping myself wholly detached from the very objects that are given me for my present use, with constant watchfulness lest the enemy should turn them into snares to enslave my heart.

I will, moreover, strive to Imitate Him by a child-like and undoubting confidence, an entire and exclusive reliance on the Infinite Goodness of God, never looking to any creature for assistance or consolation, and never indulging in any apprehensions about my own future usefulness or the temporal condition of the Community. What an insult to the Love of our Heavenly Father and what a disregard for the Doctrine of our Blessed Savior, to entertain any such worldly solicitude! But how doubly shameful and detestable in a Religious, in one that has bound himself by Vow to practise this complete self-abandonment to Divine Providence!

Second Point. The Flames, a Symbol of Chastity.

The Flames of love that we see bursting forth from the Sacred Heart of Jesus may very appropriately be taken to symbolize Angelic Chastity. For just as Poverty signifies not only detachment from earthly possessions, which is its negative aspect, but also re-

liance on Divine Providence, which is its positive side; so Chastity means not only renunciation of sensual affection but also acquisition of spiritual love, by which the humble soul is united to her Heavenly Spouse, a supernatural love founded on the same motive as the ardent charity that ever animated our Blessed Lord.

Hence, I will strive to Please my Adorable Master by cherishing an intense regard for angelic purity and virginal modesty, by ever keeping strict custody over my senses, particularly my eyes and my touch, by promptly turning away from every improper imagination or emotion, and by constantly seeking mortification in cold and heat, in hunger and thirst, in prayer and labor, in fatigue and sickness, in common penances and private austerities.

I will also strive to Imitate Him by fostering in my heart, towards all men but especially towards my fellow Religious, a genuine and practical Charity. For if the children of an earthly father are bound to mutual affection, how much more the children of our Father in Heaven, particularly such as have voluntarily pledged themselves to live and labor together for His Greater Glory! This Charity I should exercise unceasingly by being kind in all my thoughts, words, and actions; not unconcerned or unsympathetic, but full of delicate attention and tender regard for their needs and troubles, so as to discover and even to anticipate them with industrious simplicity; and, while not expecting or permitting that they should accommodate themselves to my whims or wishes, by seeking on every occasion to satisfy their reasonable desires and to second their lawful aspirations. On the other hand, I should firmly resist and resolutely stifle any tendency to particular friendship,

in my conversations or dealings with companions, pupils, or acquaintances.

I will, moreover, strive to Imitate the Sacred Heart of Jesus in Its Burning Love of God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; and this especially by ardent aspirations from morning till night, by frequent visits to my Divine Master in the Adorable Sacrament, by completely sacrificing myself with Him in every Holy Mass, and by daily receiving Him in Holy Communion with deep humility and intense fervor. Oh! may this heavenly fire purify my heart ever more from all earthly dross and thus render it less unlike the Most Pure and Loving Hearts of Jesus and Mary.

Third Point. The Cross, a Symbol of Obedience.

Since Jesus was Obedient even to the death of the Cross, what else could the Cross that surmounts the Sacred Heart symbolize for a Religious than the virtue of Obedience? Just as Christ consummated the sacrifice of Himself on that Hallowed Wood, so the self-immolation of a Religious is completed by Holy Obedience.

Hence, I will strive to Imitate my Adorable Lord, by making the practice of Obedience the chief occupation of every day and every hour of my life, from the moment I arise at the first sound of the bell till the time set for retiring to rest, ever aiming at the utmost promptitude and exactness in execution, at the sincerest joy and love in will, at the greatest simplicity and thoroughness in judgment.

I will also strive to Imitate Him by recognizing in the persons of my Superiors, not mere men subject to errors and failings, but the special Representatives of the Most High, and by entertaining towards them,

in consequence, deep reverence and warm affection.

I will strive to Imitate Him particularly by desiring to be known to my Superiors as I am in the sight of Heaven, in all matters belonging to outward government, and by laying open to my spiritual Director, of my own accord, my whole soul down to its innermost recesses, with all my faults and vices, all my aspirations and penances.

Thus Holy Obedience will become for me an ever present means of mortification and humiliation, an efficient instrument for immolating my whole self, my body and soul, my senses and faculties, my health and my very life, in union with my Crucified Savior.

Fourth Point. The Crown of Thorns, a Symbol of Regular Observance.

The Crown of Thorns imposed in mockery on our Divine King signified His rejection by the World. Hence, the Crown of Thorns encircling the Sacred Heart may aptly symbolize my fourth Vow either expressed or implied, namely, my further Obligation of devoting my remaining years to this Institute, by the faithful Observance of all its Rules and Constitutions. In some Religious Orders the members take instead a Vow of Enclosure. Considered on its negative side, this Obligation would only impose separation from the World. But our Lord surely looks for something more than this. The one object why He has placed us here in Religion, isolated from the World, is that we might wholly immolate ourselves for the conversion and sanctification of this very World. Like our Adorable Savior, we must, on the one hand, hate the spirit of the World and every form of Worldliness, but, on the other hand, we must long to save those who are living in the

World. After the example of St. Paul, each one of us is bound to fill up by his sufferings what is lacking to the Passion of Christ, each one of us is expected to contribute his own personal Holocaust towards the wider and fuller application of the infinite merits of the Cross. That is the positive side of this fourth Vow.

Hence, I will cherish all my holy Rules as constituting my effectual protection against the false allurements of the World; but I will entertain a special love for those Rules which are most Disagreeable to nature and, determined to observe them with the utmost fidelity, I will press them generously into my heart like the Thorns in the Crown of my Adorable Master.

Besides, I will studiously keep my soul free from all Intercourse with the World, from all contamination with temporal interests and secular gossip; while, by the diligent practice of Silence and Recollection, I will accustom myself to hold continual intercourse with the Sovereign Good and to attend only to the business of my Heavenly Father. In particular, I will abstain from Reading any of the Sensational dailies, weeklies, magazines, or novels of the present day, and not even touch such publications except it be my strict duty to acquaint myself with some of their contents.

But, when Obedience or Charity require me to speak, I will strive to avail myself of every such opportunity to exhort sinners to contrition and worldlings to penance, to rouse the lukewarm to true fervor and the devout to apostolic zeal, in short, to fill all hearts with contempt of earth and forgetfulness of self, and to inflame them with the love of God our Lord and with the desire of everlasting Bliss.

Fifth Point. The Sacred Heart, a Symbol of Complete Self-Denial.

In this Retreat I have understood more clearly than ever before that a Religious is called to become the Spouse of Jesus Crucified. Accordingly, placing my entire trust in the infinite merits of His Passion and the ineffable mercies of His Heart, I have resolved again to consecrate myself to Him by seeking everywhere as large a share in His afflictions as I may be permitted by Holy Obedience. By welcoming every opportunity of hardship and contempt out of regard for my Heavenly Spouse, I wish to respond to that personal love for me, a sinful nothing, which made Him embrace the unutterable shame and anguish of crucifixion in order to cancel my numberless iniquities and to secure my eternal salvation. And since the representation of the Adorable Heart of Jesus is intended to remind me of that wonderful charity for sinners by which He is ever animated, it may serve also as a symbol of my return of love, that is, of my fixed purpose to lead for His sake a life of Complete Self-Denial.

Hence, I will take the image of the Most Loving Heart of Jesus as the sacred emblem under which I hope to obtain a complete victory over myself, my pride, my sensuality, and all my other passions; over my spiritual enemies, Satan and his host of fallen angels; and over whatever temptation or persecution may arise from my fellow men in the world.

Just as the Wound, the Flames, the Cross, and the Thorns are all combined in the image of the Sacred Heart; so all other resolutions which I have been prompted to take in the course of these Spiritual Exercises, are but so many partial aspects of this firm determination, henceforth to crucify my flesh with its

vices and concupiscences, or with Christ to be nailed to the Cross.

Accordingly, I will wear the Badge of the Sacred Heart night and day close to my own heart, and press it affectionately to my lips as soon as I arise and before I fall asleep, imploring my Jesus, crucified for love of me, with all the ardor of my soul, to help me crucify myself for love of Him.

Colloquy with the Sacred Heart of Jesus, begging Him that, through great fidelity in keeping my holy Vows, Rules, and Resolutions, I may steadily advance in Religious Perfection and daily become more like to Him, my Supreme Exemplar. But first having recourse to the Immaculate Heart of Mary, I will implore her to obtain for me these same graces from her Divine Son, through her all-powerful intercession.—Hail Mary. Our Father.

DEATH

Introductory Remarks.—Holy Writ teaches us that Death entered into this world by sin. Hence, Death is for us a direct consequence of sin. On the other hand, the humble acceptance of Death is one of the easiest means of doing penance for sin, while the abiding thought of Death is one of the greatest helps to fervor and one of the best cures for inordination and worldliness. For Death keeps reminding us that “the world passes together with its concupiscence, but he that does the will of God abides forever.”

Subject of this Meditation.—The end of all that pertains to this earth, Death.

Composition of Place.—The room in which I have just died, the coffin containing my corpse, and the candles lighted on both sides. Also, a few years later, my grave in the cemetery: above, a simple tombstone; below, my skeleton surrounded by decaying wood and rags.

Petition.—Grace to correct and repair whatever was worldly, inordinate, or sinful in my past life; and to regulate my remaining years in such a manner as will insure a holy and happy Death.

First Point. Meanings of Death.

Death means Separation of the Soul from the Body. How many sufferings this will entail! not only

physical pain and mental anxiety, but perhaps also violent temptations stirred up by our implacable enemy, the Devil. Well may we exclaim with great humility and earnestness, "Holy Mary, pray for us, sinners, now and at the hour of our Death." What will be the terror and anguish of a Religious that has not lived for Heaven, for God, but for this earth, for self; of a Religious that has been neglectful of Prayer and careless in the reception of the Sacraments, has exercised no restraint over his senses and discarded the practice of mortification, has sought everywhere his own ease, comfort, and satisfaction; in a word, of a Religious that has led the life of a Wordling?

As soon as the Soul has departed, sometimes even much earlier, the Body becomes an object of loathing and horror; then it turns into a shocking mass of corruption that serves as food to the worms; and after a few years there is nothing left of it but a little dust, which in the course of ages will be scattered to the four winds. With what bitter remorse the Soul of a lost Religious will behold this utter humiliation, this complete destruction of his Body! "O fool that I was," such a soul will repeat over and over again, "this, then, is what I have pampered and worshiped at the price of my Eternal Salvation. Alas! too late I recognize my folly. It would have been so easy for me with the help of grace, to curb my animal passions, to vanquish my curiosity, my sensuality, my vanity, my pride. But no: I was content to be the abject slave of my Body, to live on earth like an irrational beast; and now I must forever burn in Hell."

For me, however, it is not yet too late to learn the lessons taught me by the impending dissolution of my Body. And the first lesson is not to devote more time or attention to its health, its comfort, its cloth-

ing, or its lodging than is really demanded by the Service of God and the Salvation of my Soul. In other words, I must not permit myself to worry about every little ailment, indisposition, or privation. That constant dread of infection or illness, with which so many men nowadays make themselves miserable, is utterly at variance, not only with the principles of the Gospel, but also with the dictates of Reason. To guard against anything like so baneful an obsession, I should set great store by the simplicity and uniformity of Common Life, admitting, in what pertains to the care of the body, nothing beyond what is customary, except in deference to the orders or wishes of Superiors. However, I ought not to rest satisfied with retrenching anything that smacks of self-indulgence. I must learn also to discipline my senses, to restrain my imagination, to guard my eyes, to mortify my taste, to chastise my body, in one word, to overcome the opposition of this Corruptible Flesh to my Higher Self and to my Eternal Interests.

Death means also Separation from the Goods of this World, earthly possessions, earthly amusements, earthly distinctions, popularity, standing, influence. How frightful an ordeal this will be for the Worldling. None of these things can be taken along; others will enjoy what he has gathered with so much anxiety; and soon his very name will be forgotten. How next to impossible it will be for him to yield up all at once every one of those objects on which his heart has been set for so many years!

What blindness, then, and what folly for any one to be so interested, so absorbed in the pursuit of these Deceptive Goods, these Empty Honors! Yes, and for us too, Religious, though by the grace of God we have long since abandoned all worldly prospects and

advantages, what a shame to be still looking for what is better in food, apparel, lodging, or furniture; or to insist on being always amply provided with various kinds of supplies; or to draw forth from outsiders little presents for our own use and convenience; or to keep in our cells any book or article of which we have no actual need. How different such conduct is from that of our holy Founders, and what a poor preparation it forms for a happy Death!

We ought, then, to labor perseveringly at detaching ourselves from the things of earth; and for this end we must constantly bear in mind their utter futility. In obedience to the loving invitation of Christ our Lord, "If you will be perfect, sell all you have and give it to the poor, and come follow Me," we must not only faithfully keep our Vow of Poverty, but also earnestly strive to acquire the Virtue of Poverty. Our Religious Profession will indeed render it easy for us to leave this world at the hour of Death, provided we are careful to rid ourselves of every superfluity, and are watchful to seize upon every chance of self-spoliation; in other words, provided we delight in being really poor.

Death means, moreover, Separation from Relatives and Friends. Now, for upright and sensitive persons this is a very painful trial. Besides, those who are drawn to the Religious State have usually an affectionate disposition. Hence they are particularly exposed to temptations that arise from an inordinate love of Relations and Acquaintances. Evidently, we must strive to anticipate the work of Death, by changing this natural and carnal love into one that is unselfish, spiritual, and supernatural. Otherwise we should prove unfit for our Sublime Vocation; according to the words of Christ: "He who hates not

father and mother, yea and his own life also, cannot be My disciple." By thus purifying our affection we do not destroy it; on the contrary, we ennoble and strengthen it.

But to succeed in this we must avail ourselves of every opportunity afforded us in Religion, unmindful of the cost of the sacrifice. We must not wish or try to see our Relatives, even on the plea of doing them good, which is mostly a piece of self-deception or a stratagem of Satan. We should not allow ourselves to worry about their temporal interests, convinced that we have left them in the care of our Loving Father in Heaven. If we receive letters, let us mortify our curiosity for a while, a few hours, even a day or two; and before reading their communications let us beg our Lord for the grace not to be mastered by our feelings. We must likewise practise moderation in writing letters. It is a good plan for Religious to write to their Relations only at fixed intervals; once, twice, four times, or six times a year, in proportion to the closeness of the kinship.

But what has meanwhile become of the Soul after this Threefold Separation, from the Body, from earthly Goods, and from Relatives or Friends? It has entered upon a new and unchangeable phase of its never-ending existence; it has stood in the presence of the All-Holy, Almighty, Inexorable Judge; it has seen in one intellectual flash all the good omitted and all the evil committed; it has been called to a strict account for every word and action, for its most transient thoughts as well as for its most hidden desires, for the use of every natural gift and every supernatural favor bestowed on it during this earthly period of probation; and it has already heard the Divine, Irrevocable Sentence that determines its lot

for all Eternity, either in Heaven or in Hell. There will be no room for defense, no call for explanation, just as there will be no plea for mercy, no appeal for pardon. Every sin not atoned for here below shall receive its full measure of punishment, and the whole debt will have to be paid to the last farthing. Such is the Particular Judgment that will be passed upon us at the very moment of our Death.

But supposing we were to die just now, where would our Soul have to go after escaping from the prison of this sinful Body? Would it be fit to mount straight to Heaven, or would it first have to be cleansed in Purgatory? Not unfrequently pious persons are heard to profess their readiness to stay a long time in Purgatory. This may be an expression either of humility or of presumption. It is a token of humility if, knowing that by their past sins they had deserved to be forever tormented in Hell, they lovingly submit to suffer in Purgatory till the divine justice is satisfied. But to look confidently forward to Purgatory as a place of expiation, and meanwhile to neglect the practice of penance here on earth, seems little less than presumption. Again, indifference with regard to the length of our detention in Purgatory is a manifest sign of spiritual sloth and tepidity. For, if we were really animated by the love of God, the prospect of remaining after our Death excluded for a time from His blissful presence, would fill our souls with a burning and insatiable thirst for every form of affliction and humiliation. Lastly, to put off the payment of our debt of temporal punishment till we have been sentenced to Purgatory is extremely foolish. For, while we rob ourselves of the inestimable advantages that accrue from leading a penitential life in accordance

with our Vocation, we are reserving for ourselves untold torture and anguish in the next world, and are even taking a serious chance of never reaching Heaven at all.

Second Point. Characteristics of Death.

Death is most Certain as to Fact. All men without exception are to die; either in the ordinary way through sickness, or in some unusual way through accident. Many people nowadays boast that they will not accept anything as true unless borne out by actual experience; yet, though nobody now living ever had the actual experience of Death every one holds it for Certain that he is going to die. No man ever dreamed of being kept alive indefinitely by some unknown forces of nature, though these are credited even with the working of miracles. Within a few years, then, the sixteen hundred millions that now inhabit the earth will all have passed away. Whether rich or poor, learned or ignorant, talented or dull, savage or civilized, good or bad, every one has got to die. Yet many live as if they were by no means convinced of this fact. They have good reason to tremble at the very thought of Death; and hence they try to drown its salutary admonitions in distractions and frivolities.

Let us be more sensible, and daily prepare for Death with the utmost diligence. Every indisposition, every infirmity is a warning of our impending dissolution. The older we grow the nearer we get to Death, and day by day our preparation should become more thorough and perfect. The sentence of Death was passed by Almighty God on Adam and all his descendants for his one sin of disobedience. Our own sins too, even our venial sins, have fully deserved

this penalty. St. Paul, the Apostle, writes to the Corinthians that many sleep, that is, are dead, on account of their irreverent and unbecoming conduct in church. Let us accept Death even now in atonement for our sins, let us humble ourselves beneath the chastising hand of God, and let us strive to conform our Death as closely as possible to that of our Adorable Lord and Savior.

But Death is most Uncertain as to Circumstances. Death comes oftenest as a surprise; even very sick people usually fail to realize that their end is so near. Hence our Lord tells us that Death will come upon us as a thief in the night. The when, the where, and the how are completely hidden from our view. We do not know anything about the time, the place, or the manner of our departure from this world. Therefore, we must never harbor in our heart any evil disposition for even one instant, never permit ourselves any delay in the discharge of duty, but constantly keep our conscience pure and peaceful.

However, there is one important circumstance which we can foresee with a fair amount of probability, almost with certainty. It is whether a person is going to die in the state of Grace or in the state of Sin; whether a soul is going to depart from this earth in the brightness of love or in the darkness of tepidity. For both reason and faith tell us plainly, that as a man lives so shall he die. Consequently, if we wish to die in the friendship of God, we must never trifle with a temptation to grievous Sin. If we wish to die with a Prayer on our lips, we should habitually raise our minds to Heaven during our daily occupations. If we wish to die a fervent and holy Death, we must unremittingly strive to lead a fervent and holy Life.

How grateful, therefore, we should feel for having been called to Religion, how highly we should esteem our holy Institute! How pleasant it is to live in the convent, and how safe to die! For there every help is afforded to persevere in Sanctifying Grace, there every opportunity is given for the practice of Prayer, there every facility is found for the frequent and fervent reception of the Sacraments. Since we wish to die in the company of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, let us constantly live in their close imitation and holy intimacy. This, indeed, is the essence of the Religious State. How awful it is to die in a doubtful condition, in a lukewarm disposition; and how blessed it is to die in the Lord, in the consciousness of being united with Him on the Cross!

Again the Moment of Death is absolutely Decisive. We die but once. Death is the great Crisis of our whole existence. On that one moment will depend everything forever after. For our last agony is the closing scene of our preparation for eternity, it is the end of our earthly career of evolution and merit. Are we ready to die right now? Is there any Task we should prefer to have accomplished, any Resolution we should wish to have taken, any Sacrifice we should like to have made? How would we spend the remaining months or days, if we were to die before the end of this year? With what fervor we would apply ourselves to Prayer and Penance; with what diligence we would practise Poverty, Modesty, and Obedience; with what energy we would attend to our Particular Examen. Yet we may die much sooner; even before the end of this month, or in the course of this week, in fact, at any moment within the next twenty-four hours. And then our lot is forever fixed.

Third Point. Preparations for Death.

The most obvious Preparation we can make for a holy Death is habitual Fervor. Even at the best, life is but all too short. Hence, we should be watchful not to lose one single instant. Our day should be divided between Prayer and Labor. We ought never to devote more time to sleep or rest or recreation than is really indispensable. We should spend every day as if we were to die before night-fall. From the moment we awake, we should strive to give ourselves entirely to God, in sentiments of adoration, contrition, confidence, and love. Day after day we must exert ourselves by means of the General and Particular Examens to eradicate our defects; to purify our heart completely from every venial sin, from every inordinate affection, from every worldly folly; and thus to inflame it more and more with a sincere and ardent love for God and men.

Confession also is an excellent Preparation for Death, provided we labor to make it every time as well as we can, not so much by searching the inmost recesses of the soul—which ought rather to be done in our daily Examinations of Conscience—but especially by conceiving real and deep confusion blended with fervent and practical contrition. When about to accuse ourselves of our faults in the confessional, we should in spirit kneel with Mary Magdalen at the feet of our Adorable Lord, of Him Who is soon to be our Sovereign Judge. While carefully shunning all scrupulosity we should persistently strive to acquire greater delicacy of conscience, which means a more thorough detestation of sin, inordination, and worldliness. This holy hatred will grow in proportion as we seek to expiate our faults by every means in our power; not only eagerly accepting the little

trials and hardships sent us by God, and gladly embracing the opportunities of penance that are inseparable from the faithful performance of our daily duties, but generously adding to the ordinary practices of self-denial sanctioned by Rule and Custom some special austerities permitted by our Confessor or Superior.

However, the best Preparation for a happy Death undoubtedly consists in the worthy reception of Holy Communion, since this Adorable Sacrament is a Divine Pledge of Everlasting Life. Unless we are positively prevented by circumstances, we should not allow a single day to pass without partaking of this Heavenly Banquet. However dry, drowsy, or distracted we may feel, we should never hesitate to approach the Holy Table as long as, not conscious of a grievous fault, we are resolved to advance in the service and love of God. An intense desire springing from a vivid realization of our manifold shortcomings, and a boundless trust arising from a lively faith in this Adorable Mystery,—these form the chief dispositions with which we should strive to welcome our Divine Guest and Judge. It is in particular this August Sacrament that will enable us to die to ourselves and thus render our physical Death more peaceful and more meritorious. “Blessed are they who die in the Lord.” These words of Holy Writ will apply literally to us if, every time we prepare for Communion, we take care to do so as though it were to be our Viaticum.

Colloquies: first, with St. Joseph, the special and powerful Patron of a happy Death, to whom was granted the unique favor of dying in the sweet embrace of Jesus and Mary; then, with the Blessed Vir-

gin, our Mother, who suffered the most cruel agony when she stood by the Cross of her only Son, and whose actual Death was the effect of her consuming love of God; lastly, with our Adorable Savior expiring for our sakes in the torments and ignominy of crucifixion after exclaiming, "Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit."—Our Father.

BOOKS RECOMMENDED

—for—

RETREAT READING

Conference Matter for Religious.....	Girardey
Directorium Asceticum.....	Scaramelli
Helps to a Spiritual Life.....	Schneider
History of the Passion.....	Groenings
Interior of Jesus and Mary.....	Grou
Jesus All Good.....	Gallerani
Jesus All Great.....	Gallerani
Jesus All Holy.....	Gallerani
Religious and the Sacred Heart.....	Yenveux
Retreat	Hedley
Retreat Conferences.....	Cox
Short Readings for Religious.....	Cox
Solid Virtue.....	Bellecius
Spirit of Sacrifice.....	Giraud
Spiritual Despondency and Temptations....	Michel
Spiritual Instructions for Religious.....	Coppens
Spiritual Perfection through Charity.....	Buckler
Thoughts on the Religious Life.....	Lasance
Three Fundamental Principles.....	Meschler
True Spouse of Jesus Christ..	St. Alphonsus Liguori
Union with Our Lord Jesus Christ.....	Saint-Jure
Way that Leads to God.....	Sandreau

BENEDICTINE UNIVERSITY LIBRARY

277.459/241925

C001

AN EIGHT DAYS' RETREAT FOR RELIGIOUS 3D



3 2811 00016 1655